



MARS News

Inside this issue:

2009 Charlotte Hamfest	3
Flea Market Setup Committee Says Thanks!	6
2009 NC QSO Party	6
February and March Meetings	7
Mars to Again Support Time Trials	8
Discovery Place Volunteers Needed	9
March Board Minutes	10

A Letter from the President

I hope everyone has been doing well this month. We all have had a very busy month doing lots of work for MARS. But we also have been having a lot of fun doing many different Ham Radio activities as well. I would like to say a big 'Thank You' to everyone who took some of their time and helped out MARS.

The first thing we did as a club this month was to compete in the N.C. QSO Party. The contest was a lot of fun. We started at Noon, and I was having so much fun contesting that I really didn't want to quit. Then Ben - WB2RHM called Jeff - KA4WYC on the cell phone at 6PM to tell us that if we didn't leave in the next few minutes or so, we were going to become snowed-in at the club room. Gosh, I was having so much fun talking all around the world and making contacts that I just hated to leave, even if it was snowing hard outside. In the end, I decided I'd better leave before the others (Chris - KJ4IVK, Ray - N4APR, Jeff - KA4WYC, and Daniel - KG4ENP) tied me up, duct taped my mouth shut, and hauled me out to my truck J. Of course, I know they were only thinking of my safety. Next time we have a contest at the clubroom, come out have some fun. One thing is for sure; the fun and excitement of these contests are going to turn me into a contester woman yet.



The next major club activity, one that we have been planning for all year, was the 2009 Charlotte Hamfest. This year we held our Hamfest at the Cabarrus Arena in Concord, N.C. We invited everyone in the ARRL Roanoke Division to come on March 14th and 15th to have a wonderful time at the Charlotte Hamfest.



The Hamfest Committee, and those of you who volunteered, worked very hard to make the 2009 Charlotte Hamfest happen and I really feel like it turned out great. Again, our 'Thanks' goes out to all who helped to make the 2009 Charlotte Hamfest a success.

One of the things we were going to do at the Hamfest was have a Special Event Station - W4B operate in celebration of our 60th Anniversary as Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society along with a Special QSL cards designed by Ben - WB2RHM. But we decided to cancel doing it during the Hamfest, due to such bad weather. Putting up an antenna in the pouring rain we had all weekend was just not safe. But, we had a "Plan B", thanks to John - WB2NHQ and Ben - WB2RHM. They came up with the idea to still celebrate our 60th Anniversary during the week after the Hamfest by having our 9PM Metrolina 2 Meter Emergency Net use our special call sign W4B. Everyone checking into our net all week will receive a special W4B QSL card. We recorded a total of 96 unique check-ins on the net counting check-ins during the week of W4B operation plus check-ins during the net on the March 25th 60th Anniversary of the club.



Letter from the President (cont.)

We also shared our 60th Anniversary with the world. From Tuesday March 17th until Saturday March 21st, some MARS members operated from the Clubroom or their home stations making contacts and signing W4B on the HF bands using SSB, PSK31, and RTTY. The W4B contact totals are 870+ contacts on 80, 40, 20, 15, and 2m. We are already receiving QSL cards acknowledging the QSOs and requesting our special W4B QSL card.

We will also be celebrating our 60th Anniversary at this month's club meeting on the 31st. Be sure to come out and attend this historic gathering of the members of MARS.

We are very Thankful to have a wonderful club with such great members in it. I feel very honored and special to be your President of the Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society for the past two years.

73,

Jodie KI4CXO, President

2009 Charlotte Hamfest

On a chilly, rainy morning, Friday the 13th March 2009, dozens of volunteer workers, as well as numerous decorators, commercial and flea market dealers converged on the Cabarrus Arena and Event Center in Concord, NC to make Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society history. This was the start of the 2009 Charlotte Hamfest Weekend! On Saturday morning, the crowds arrived!



On March 14th, the 2009 Charlotte Hamfest's day had arrived, after almost a continuous year of hard planning and effort by the 2009 Hamfest Committee, headed up by its chairperson and MARS President Jodie Rowland – KI4CXO.



A sold-out area of 312 flea market tables was set-up and arranged by a team of volunteers. When all was set, the flea market dealers set up their goodies for all to see.



2009 Charlotte Hamfest (cont)

The commercial dealer area was assembled and decorated by the professional decorating contractor, who also set up ticket booths at the entrance to the Hamfest.



Two conference rooms rented for the 'forums', Bingo, and VE testing areas were arranged by staff from the Cabarrus Arena. The 'forum' room was the site for the NC Army MARS, the ARRL, the Willis Island and Desecheo Island Dxpeditions, and the D-Star forums.



Josh (W4WJF) answering questions about his K5D DXpedition presentation.



ARRL Officials from the National, Division and Section were present to speak at the ARRL Forums. Division Director Bodson – W4PWF, Section Manager Slay – N4IB, and ARRL Regulatory Info Manager Henderson – N1ND all spoke to the assembled group.



2009 Charlotte Hamfest (cont.)

Earl – K4KAY and Dr. Bill – WA2EDN staffed the ‘testing station’, while “Yellow Jackets” roamed the aisles with watchful eyes.



Ben – WB2RHM set-up the club’s public ‘sit down and rest area’ with a computer and two display screens that continuously ran his video photo slideshow production of MARS activities from over past years plus ARRL Ham Radio Public Service videos.

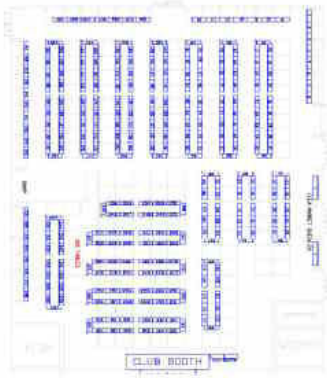


The final gate results are still being calculated, but first indications and visitor feedback are that in this terrible economic year, the 2009 Charlotte Hamfest was a success. And we now begin planning for the 2010 Charlotte Hamfest.....

73 – WB2RHM



Flea Market Setup Committee Says Thanks!



The Flea market Set Up Committee wants to say Thank You to the 15 volunteers who braved the rain and the cold to arrive at the Cabarrus Arena at 9AM on Friday the 13th of March 2009. You all did an outstanding job of setting up the 312 tables of the 'new' flea market area of the hamfest. You swiftly 'adjusted' when it was necessary and we all learned valuable lessons about the arena floor plan and layout possibilities that will be used for next year's flea market. Thanks

Remember: The 2009 Hamfest couldn't happen without YOU!

73, WB2RHM-

2009 NC QSO Party

Short but Sweet

On Sunday March 1st, a team of MARS members gathered at 11AM in the MARS clubroom at the Red Cross, to prepare to participate in the latest edition of the classic North Carolina State QSO Party.

The MARS team consisted of Club President Jodie – KI4CXO, Ray – N4APR (Control Op), Jeff – KA4WYC, Daniel – KG4ENP (Alternate Control Op), and Chris – KJ4IVK.

The contest began promptly at noon. QSOs were made all across NC (trying to log a contact with all 100 NC counties), 35 NC counties were worked.



26 states from across the U.S., plus 1 DX contact were made also. The QSO total had reached 169 by around 6PM..... Then a phone call came in from the outside world. A winter storm warning had been issued and frozen precipitation was beginning to come down and accumulate on roads, bridges and overpasses. The contest effort had to be abandoned, despite objections 'to work just one more QSO' from Jodie. The final total was 169 contacts worth 21006 points. When results come in, we'll let you know how this year's shortened NCQP did.

73- WB2RHM

February and March Meetings

Our featured presenters for February was Dick Williams (W3OA). Dick gave a presentation about software operators can use when operating CW. Dick first described how software defined radios worked. He then showed two software programs.

The first was CWGet. CWGet allows you to decode morse code using your PC. The audio from your receiver goes into your sound card's mic input. The software takes it from there and uses computer algorithms to decode the dits and dahs into text.

The second software application was CWSkimmer. CWSkimmer is a more advance CW decoding package. Like CWGet it works via your sound card. For those familiar with the PSK31 waterfall, CWSkimmer provides an equivalent functionality where you can watch many CW signals across a portion of a band.

Dick talked a little about the controversies around these types of software packages (especially CWSkimmer). Some testers feel that these types of programs are at the very least minimizing the amount of skill required to contest and are at most just outright cheating.

Thanks Dick for a very interesting presentation. Computers and software certainly are changing the world of the amateur radio.

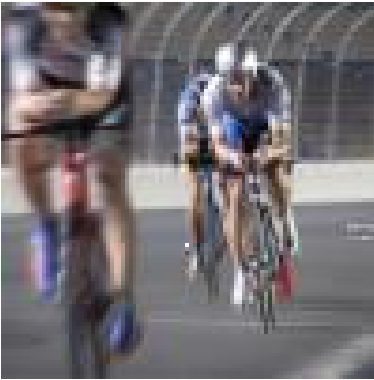
For the March meeting, Bill Stevenson (AJ4JZ) will give a presentation on ham radio digital modes. This should be a very interesting presentation. Please plan to attend.

73,

Jeff - KA4WYC



MARS to Again Support Time Trials



MARS will again provide support for the cycling time trials sponsored by CCTTA (Carolina Cycling Time Trial Association) at Lowes Motor speedway for 2009. There are six events scheduled:

May 5 – Tue

Jun 3 – Wed

Jul 15 – Wed

Aug 5 – Wed

Aug 26 – Wed

Sep 30 – Wed

Four workers plus one lead ham are needed for each event. Mary (K4MH), Jeff, (KA4WYC) and Earl (K4KAY) have volunteered to lead 2 events each. The "work" entails monitoring the riders and correcting those that are violating the rules (a pictorial rule book is available for new workers to review). It's best to come and work with an experienced worker for an event and then get assigned a position on your own at a later event.

Either a handheld or mobile 2M radio is used (146.52). Most of the time you can sit in a lawn chair and hold up signs correcting riders as they go by. A typical evening starts at 6pm with pre-race meeting and ends at 8:30 when the track is cleared. Cyclists start at 6:30 so all hams must be in position by then as no vehicles are allowed on the track when racing is in progress.

The CCTTA has again agreed to donate \$100 per event to MARS at the conclusion of the season. Last year's donation went to the repeater committee to upgrade several repeaters.

Contact one of the leads if you would like to volunteer. We need 4 volunteers for each event but we can use more if additional people volunteer.

73.

Bill—WA2EDN

Discovery Place Volunteers Needed

The Radio Room at Discovery Place has been closed for some time now while that part of the building is undergoing renovation. The future location, if there is indeed to be one, has yet to be determined. The number of days that the station was unoccupied from a lack of volunteer operators did not impress the museum management of the need of our occupying the floor space. A ham radio station in a museum of science is a rare and unique thing. Of the many such museums in the U.S. the number having an operating station can probably be counted on one's fingers.

The station has provided us the opportunity to present our hobby on a continuing basis to the general public and to recruit newcomers, both young and old, into our ranks. Such exposure can do much to improve the image and demonstrate the usefulness of ham radio in civic activities and emergencies. A positive image is a necessity for public support and to head off laws and codes restricting ham radio. Visitors to the station often have asked if our hobby is becoming obsolete and irrelevant in the age of computers and the internet.

Our goal is to get a list of prospective operators for a re-opening sometime in late summer or early fall. We plan the same shifts as before, 9:30 – 1:00 and 1:00 – 4:30 each day except Sunday, and 1:00 – 4:30 on Sunday. You can run the radio room for as little as one half day per month up to a whole day per week. We do need to keep the station open all of these times with rare exception.

The control operator of the NC4DP station does not have to be a "big gun operator". It is much more important to be able to describe to people young and old, what hams do and how we do it, to communicate with other hams near and far. To many visitors, this is "magic revealed". The technologies that we have in the station are awesome to visitors including the mathematics of frequency and wave length, simple ohm's law, and the common applications of science, geography, FCC rules, and computer generated "ciphers" like morse code, PSK/31, or RTTY.

Did we forget to mention that working a station with a half kilowatt and a beam is just plain fun? We have dipoles for 80 & 40, a 7 element / 5 band beam for 20 – 10, with verticals and beams for VHF and UHF. Does anyone want to try satellites? When you use your own personal callsign you get the QSL cards for your own collection, we also have some more generic QSL cards (with space for your call).

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer operator at the station, please put your information in the spaces below (even if you were working the station just before the close) and return it as soon as possible to either W4PVT or WB2NHQ. Use either email, or US mail. If you cannot volunteer, just check "no" with at least your name and call so we can verify who has received this letter. This does not obligate you in any way but we do need a list of prospective volunteers before we can resume operation.

(continued on next page)



A positive image is a necessity for public support and to head off laws and codes restricting ham radio

Discovery Place Volunteers (cont)

Thanks And 73,

Mac Wood, W4PVT

5800 McAlpine Farm Rd

Charlotte, NC 28226

W4PVT@aol.com

John White, WB2NHQ

7010 Thermal Rd.

Charlotte, NC 28211

WB2NHQ@arrl.net

Interested ? Provide us the following info:

Name: _____

Call and license class: _____

Address: _____

Phone / e-mail: _____

March Board Minutes

Board Meeting March 3, 2009

Jodie started the meeting @ 7 PM. Present were Jodie-KI4CXO, Tom- KA3VVJ, Jeff-KA4WYC, Ben-WB2RHM, Mary-N4MH, Andy-K4GKK, Kevin-K4YYD. Bill-W4GRW will be late and Jerry-N4MIU will be absent due to illness.

Ben made a motion to accept the minutes of last board meeting, which was approved.

Tom gave a report on our budget, and a profit / loss. There was a discussion on paid dues. There needs to be a better way to have members to pay their dues on time. Ben talked about the use of PayPal in the future.

Ben stated the 220 repeater was operating. Earl was asking we reconsider using a phone line up on the bank building. Tom will look into getting the phone line and coordinate with Earl.

Tom said the Discovery Place check hasn't come yet, but we are looking for it.

Mary gave a report for the MS bike tour. We have a lot of public service events. Mary will contact several people about the different events.

Kevin will contact Mint Hill Town Hall about contract for the Field Day site.

Ben said the web site is working ok.

Ben said we will have the Callsign of W4B as the Special Event Station at the Hamfest and to use the week following the Hamfest from the club room or at members homes.

Bill came in and stated the program will be on ham radio software and other digital radio information. This will be a MUST see program.

Jodie said she is still thinking about the picnic. So if you would like to help with this event please see Jodie.

Old business – the club room has been painted by Andy Hawkins, Bill Fisher and Tom Hunt.

New business – Andy will contact John about the RV and the EOC.

Jodie asked if there was any other business, having none we adjourned @ 8:15

Respectfully submitted by

Jeff KA4WYC – Secretary for 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 Re-
peaters**

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, wb2rhm@w4bfb.org

Jerry Brewer, N4MIU, n4miu@w4bfb.org

Mary Hunt, N4MH, n4mh@w4bfb.org

Andy Hawkins, K4GKK, k4gkk@w4bfb.org

Kevin Keyes, K4YYD, k4yyd@w4bfb.org



**Mecklenburg Amateur
Radio Society, Inc**

Richard Y. Dodd, K4KRW, Editor
7000 Heatherford Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28226

E-mail: k4krw@w4bfb.org