



MARS NEWS

Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society



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**Next Meeting - Tue. October 26 @
7:30pm - East Baptist Church**

PROGRAM

Barry Baines, WD4ASW, Vice President of Field Operations for AMSAT, will give a Power Point presentation on the newest satellite ECHO. This is a FM and Digi repeater. Several members have heard this program before, and stated it was superb! Be sure to come!



ECHO

President's Letter

Sorry to say that once again no letter has been received from the President for this month's edition.

Don't forget Jamboree On The Air. John - WB2NHQ will lead about 75 Girl Scouts in ham activity on **Sun, Oct 17** from noon to 4pm. They will be active from the Girl Scout Hornet's Nest Council located at 7001 Idlewild Rd. Please join them or look for them on the air, hf, 2-mtrs, ssb, cw, & rtty.

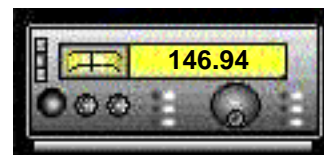
If you want to run for one of the Board of Directors positions, please chat with Dave Stewart or Shawn Godwin. Three director positions are available along with

President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary.

If you have ham or computer gear for sale or just want to browse, look at <www.w4ncu.com> to see the ham classifieds.



Volunteer Net Controllers
needed for the Metrolina
Emergency 2-mtr net.
Contact Jim Payne,
n4jbp@arrl.net, Net Mgr.
Net meets nightly @ 9pm





CHRISTMAS PARTY



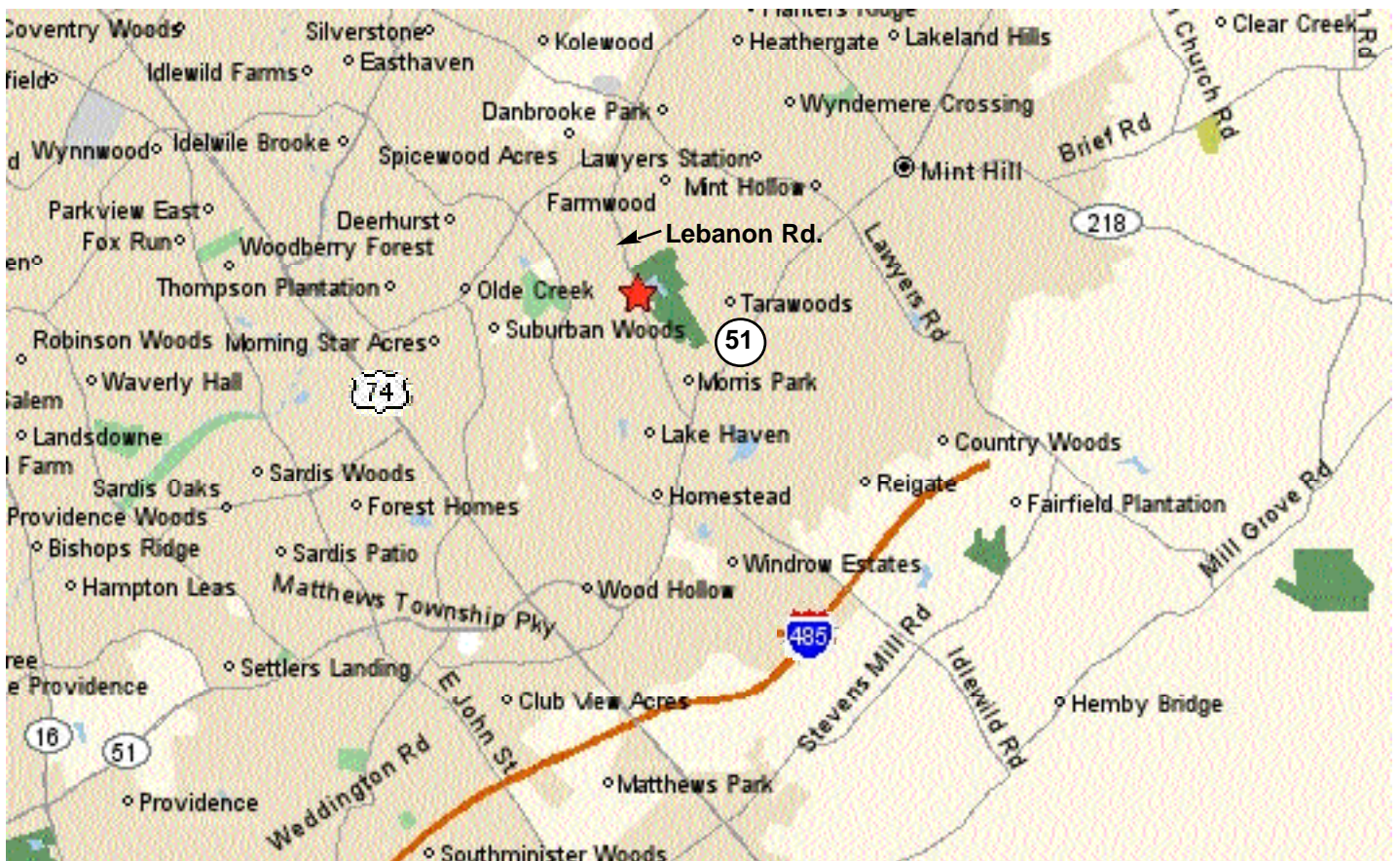
This year the MARS Christmas party will be held at the Pine Lake Country Club on Saturday evening, December 11 starting with a social period at about 7 PM with dinner to follow at 7:30. The Pine Lake Country Club is located in Mint Hill on Lebanon Road about 1.3 miles south of the intersection of Lebanon and Margaret Wallace or about 1.1 miles north of the intersection of Lebanon and Matthews-Mint Hill Road (NC 51).

If traveling south on I 485, exit at Lawyers Road, turning right onto Lawyers and proceed on Lawyers about 2.5 miles to Matthews-Mint Hill Road (NC51). Turn left onto NC51 and go about 2.2 miles to Lebanon Road. Turn right on Lebanon. Pine Lake Country Club is on the right a little over a mile up Lebanon.

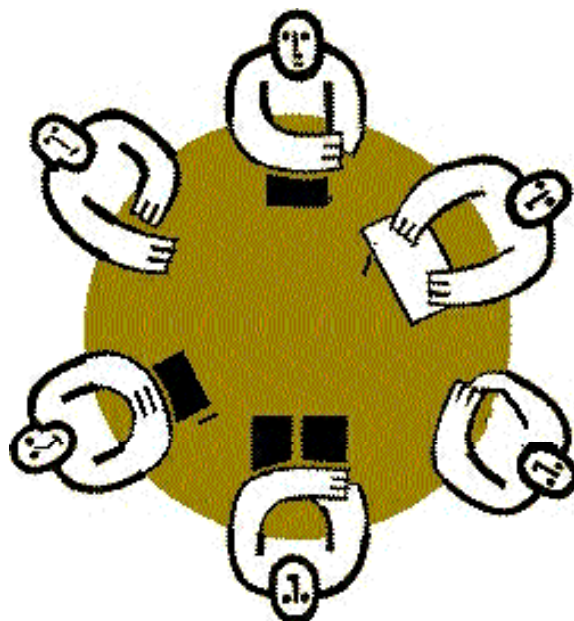
If traveling east on I 485, exit at Idlewild Road, turning left onto Idlewild and proceed on Idlewild about 1.7 miles to Matthews-Mint Hill Road (NC 51). Turn right onto NC51 and go about 0.7 miles to Lebanon Road. Turn left onto Lebanon. Pine Lake Country Club is on the right a little over a mile up Lebanon.

Reservations are required and the cost will be \$10 per club member, \$10 for member's significant other and \$25 for non-member guests. Room size will limit the number of participants but we hope to accommodate everyone interested. Meal selection will be beef, chicken or seafood and must be made at the time of reservation and payment. Reservations will be taken at the regular club meetings in October and November. More details on the menu will be available at the club meetings. A cash bar will be available.

Let's make this one of our best parties ever!. Please try to attend. We are letting you know well in advance of the date so you can try to avoid conflicts.



Sorry to say that the minutes of the October 5th Board Meeting have not been received in time to place them here.



Breakaway to the Beach - 2004

How Can Something That's So Much Work Be So Much Fun?

This year's big adventure, the MS150 Breakaway to the Beach bike ride, began three weeks early when I got an email - there was a bridge out on the Weddington bike route. The repairs wouldn't be finished until November. A mad scramble through maps revealed only two alternatives - straight down US 52 or the road through nowhere. Either way, the Weddington cyclists would be riding well over 100 miles on the first day.

Then there was Hurricane Gaston. Shawn, K4RSG, and John, WB2NHQ, drove the route the next week to check out the repeater coverage. Cell phone coverage in Patrick SC wasn't great - the bike tour would need good radio coverage along the new detoured route. I gave a holler on the Pageland repeater and Shawn answered. I gave them the route changes. They couldn't make out what I was saying. Groan! My phone rang. It was Shawn on his cell phone. He understood me fine and took down the route changes and then passed them along to John. Humm . . . Maybe the reason they couldn't hear me on two meters was because I was in Mint Hill.

A few minutes later, the phone rang again. Shawn said that John said that there was a section of road that looked like Gaston had flooded - the pavement was broken up. Groan!

A little while later, the phone rang again. Caller ID said it was Shawn. I groaned again.

At the club meeting the next night, Shawn told us that Jack, W4APE, had been keeping a secret. This wonderful silent key who had helped us behind the scenes for so many years had never told us - we had been frying the link system every year. It had been designed for light duty and we had hardly ever given it a rest. This year we were going to have to make an effort not to let it happen again.

I spent the next week redrawing the Weddington route maps and updating my website with this year's fre-

quencies and sign-up and so on.

And then there was Ivan. Groan! The closer we got to the bike ride date, the worse the weather forecasts got. So, of course, a few of us started reminiscing on the radio. None of us could remember the name of the hurricane that came through a few years ago the day before the bike ride. The cyclists had to ride down the center of the roads to stay out of the water - much to the disapproval of the highway patrol.

A year or two before, we had to change the second day of the bike route so that everyone bicycled from Florence to Rockingham - Hurricane Fran had closed all the roads down east.

In the previous eighteen years, we had postponed the bike ride only once - when Hugo left the roads littered with thousands of trees.

And then there was Hurricane Jeanne.

Two days before the bike ride, the forecasts were for Ivan to circle northeast Charlotte - expect rain, rain, and more rain. And heavy winds. Everyone on the radio wanted to know if the bike ride would be cancelled.

Friday afternoon, the sun came out. It was a beautiful afternoon with Carolina Blue skies - a bit windy, but still beautiful.

As we passed Society Hill SC headed for Florence, we saw WB2NHQ setting up the club trailer at Saturday's lunch stop. We heard Tim, N4IB, as he was about to check into the motel in Florence. It was going to happen! All the doom and gloom forecasts were wrong! We were going to have a great weekend for cycling to the beach.

Saturday morning, the weather was gorgeous. Groan! Okay, I'll admit it - I'm the only person on the planet that hopes for rain on Saturday morning. The cyclists ride much more carefully in the rain. In the years that we've started out in the rain, we've had no - zero, zip, zilch - no accidents. When the weather is perfect,

everyone is too excited and enthusiastic and careless.

I was also a bit worried that we didn't have enough SAG vehicles this year - only two for the Weddington route and two for the Rockingham route. But fortunately, the bad weather forecasts discouraged Dave, KC4YPB, and Perry, KF4UVL, from riding their motorcycles. They came in real handy as a support vehicle this year.

And I got to be one too! It was incredibly exciting for me to be out driving on the bike route again. I had quit driving seven years ago when my MS had made it impossible for me to stay focused on a task for more than a few minutes at a time. And now, finally, "better living through chemistry" had helped me become a SAG again.

Its hard to describe how it felt. My husband, Lew, hates driving around cyclists (even though he is one). It makes him terribly nervous. Me? I instantly relaxed. Automatically, I started watching for cyclists coming abreast on both sides. When driving the route backwards, I instinctively slowed when cresting a hill - in case struggling cyclists happened to be passing one another. I was so relaxed - it had all come back.

Well, maybe I hadn't remembered everything. A word of advice - don't roll your window down and shout, "POT HOLE!" at a cyclist. You might be misunderstood.

Its funny how different people notice different things. I was driving backwards along the route and commented to Lew on how many cyclists were wearing Mardi Gras beads. Lew said he hadn't noticed what people were wearing - he was too busy looking at their bicycles.

Between Rest Stops Five and Six, we got a glimpse of a storm's fury. It could have been Gaston or Ivan or even straight line winds. Whatever the cause, a giant weed whacker had crossed the road. Dozens of trees had snapped off about two feet from the ground. A road sign had huge, non-round holes where debris had been driven through it. (Anyone think to take a picture?)

The afternoon went smoothly. No communication problems. No accidents with more than minor road rash. The last cyclist arrived in Florence a little earlier than last year, so the net ended early. Everyone was headed for a shower and dinner and a relaxing evening. Until . . . Sparkey, KE4TES, radioed for an ambulance. "Sparkey, are you alright? Were you in an accident?" was everyone's first thought. If you have to turn your car over, doing it with an EMT watching might be a good thing. No, Sparkey wasn't involved in the accident but another HAM and her mother was. It was one of the HAMs helping on the Camden route. They didn't appear to be hurt badly, but went to the hospital just to make sure.

Dinner at Bazen's was comfortable and relaxed. It was great to have Sue, K9SUE, along with us this year working at Rest Stop E. It was also Jodie's, KI4CXO, birthday. We, as a group, can't carry a tune - not even "Happy Birthday." Dave, W4LNY, had signed up to work Rest Stop B, so he'd be done early and could quit early. Instead he ended up filling a couple of communication holes we had. And there he was having dinner in Florence and planning to work with us on Sunday too.

Communications on Sunday has always been a challenge. Years ago, we ran two nets - one for the western leg and one for the coastal leg. This year we hoped to use linked repeaters. The net had just barely begun when we began having problems. The link was working intermittently. Yep, we had fried the link system again. It seemed that Sunday was plagued with communications problems of one sort or another. Two of the repeaters we were using use tones. Without a way to test your radio programming a head of time . . . Well, we didn't hear much from a couple of folks on Sunday. While I proudly brag that I had my radios programmed correctly, I must admit that I was part of a communications snafu. My radio is mounted low on my console so I can't see the display while I'm driving. I depend on my sense of touch and count the clicks when I change frequencies. I was on the wrong repeater when I volunteered to do a hospital transport that was needed. My signal was so bad that John thought I was at the scene of an accident. It took several minutes to get communications straightened out.

But our worst communications problems came not long after the ride started on Sunday morning. What is normally a day's worth of accidents all happened within a few minutes and within a few miles of each other. Sorting out the accident reports was further complicated when it was realized that they were along the county line. Which ambulance service had to be called? All of our HAM/EMTs were scrambling to get to the downed cyclists. Since most of the accidents were on US 76, KC4YPB's truck and light bar came in mighty handy. No, we didn't have any more accidents this year than last year. They just all happened at the same time this year.

Hopefully, we can all synchronize our calendars and get together for a post-event review and brainstorm ways to prevent these same communications problems from happening again.

After all that excitement on Sunday morning, the rest of the day was quite uneventful. Lew and I transported a cyclist to the hospital who was trying to pass a kidney stone (poor guy). On the way to the hospital in Loris, we came upon a personal SAG following a lone rider. I yelled out, "I hate personal SAGs!" Looking in my rearview mirror, I asked our passenger, "Okay if I run her off the road?" He nodded vigorously.

It seems kind of silly that I dislike personal SAGs so much. The last few years that I tried to ride my bike to the beach, it seemed that Andy, G4GKK was my personal SAG, I saw so much of him. The last time Andy picked me up, he didn't know that the heat combined with my MS had taken the sight from my right eye and dimmed the vision in my left eye. He didn't know that that would be the last time he'd be giving me a ride. But, thanks to all of you for the inspiration, that was when I decided to become a HAM.

A simple "Thank You!" to all of you who have helped make these fund raising events possible just doesn't seem enough. When you are out there lifting a bicycle into your truck or van, or sitting at a rest stop, or unloading a truck, you are giving hope to thousands of people like me with MS. In the 23 years I've been living with MS, medical research has changed our understanding of MS, has brought about new treatments for managing MS and its symptoms and has extended our

life spans to "normal."

Thank you for helping make all this possible.

Elena - KS4OX

There is not enough room for the Club Info page this month. If you need info on repeaters or how to get to the Club Meeting, refer to last month's addition that can be found on the web site...

<www.w4bfb.org>.

The BFB club station is open to those who rent a key and take a short instruction course on the equipment that is there. Located at the Red Cross Building on Park Road, See John White - WB4NHQ about a key.

N.C. CLUB EVENTS - OCTOBER

Grandfather Mountain, NC: Goldsboro Amateur Radio Club, W4GOL. Beginning 1500Z Oct 18. East Coast Mile High Event. 28.490 21.350 14.280 146.580 446.000. QSL. Ray Lane, KD4FV, 612 Gloucester Rd, Goldsboro, NC 27534. www.geocities.com/dzdz.geo/Garc.htm.

Randleman, NC: Tri-County ARC, NC4AR. 1400Z-1830Z Oct 23. 16th Annual NASCAR Day Festival. 14.278 7.268. Certificate. NC4AR, PO Box 747, Trinity, NC 27370.

Brevard, NC: Transylvania County Amateur Radio Club, K4HXZ. 1600Z-2200Z Oct 31. Halloween in Transylvania County. 28.335 21.365 14.295 7.237. Certificate. TCARC, PO Box 665, Pisgah Forest, NC 28768.

Pumpkin Center, Jacksonville, NC: The Onslow Amateur Radio Club, Inc, WD4FVO. 1900Z-2359Z Oct 31. Halloween from Pumpkin Center. 28.360 14.260 7.260 3.860. Certificate. The Onslow Amateur Radio Club, Inc, PO Box 841, Jacksonville, NC 28541. www.onslowarc.org.