ORANGE COUNTY RADIO AMATEURS

an ARRL-affiliated organization in Orange County, North Carolina
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The August 2010 OCRA Newsletter

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Board Meeting Minutes

The Orange County Radio Amateurs Board Meeting for August, 2010, began at 1830L (6:30PM) on Monday, August 9th at Casa Ibarra restaurant in Hillsborough. In attendance were the following OCRA Officers and Board Members:

Ken (KR4FM), President
Dave (W4SAR) Vice-President
Woody (K3VSA), Secretary
Karen (KD4YJZ), Board Member
Dave (NA4VY), Board Member
Laurie (N1YXU), Board Member
Bruce (N1LN), Board Member

Also attending were:

Dee (KU4GC)
Lisa (KJ4PFB)
Mike (W4DSE)
M.K. (W4MKR)
Sam (KJ4VWG)
Wilson (W4BOH)

No further information was presented about the proposed weather station to be installed at the WCOM studios. Nobody knew if Steve (KZ1X) had been made aware that more was being sought, so it was agreed to mention it to Steve.

Woody mentioned that some club members had expressed interest in having a program about D-STAR, so it was agreed that Gary (KN4AQ) be contacted and asked if he would conduct such a presentation.

Several board members and officers had received information from Chris (KG4CFX) about Amateur Radio participation in an upcoming triathlon in Hillsborough. This conflicted with several other events that had already been scheduled, and it was agreed to ask at the membership meeting to see who might be interested in volunteering. It was said that maybe a dozen operators might be needed.

Woody proposed that the club purchase the four foot-by-four foot "When All Else Fails" banner sold by the ARRL for $40 plus shipping. The banner would normally be displayed on the back wall of the ARES station inside the Orange EOC and would also be used as a backdrop to the information tent during Field Day and other promotional events. The board, voting unanimously, approved the purchase of the banner.

A further proposal to contribute a small sum of perhaps $25 to qsl dot net, which had been hosting the OCRA web pages for ten years and has recently enjoyed a change in administration, was tabled.

-Woody K3VSA

Membership Meeting Highlights

The OCRA Membership meeting for August 2010 was held at the Orange County EOC building in Hillsborough on Monday, August 9h and was called to order at 1930L (7:30PM) by OCRA President Ken Kauffmann (KR4FM). Introductions were made as per custom.

Dan (KR4UB) reporting as OCRA Treasurer, stated that the club's bank balance was $6,617.94 at present. Speaking as Repeater Manager, Dan said that they were waiting for cooler weather, possibly at the beginning of September, to troubleshoot the 6 Meter antenna and hopefully restore repeater operation on that band.

Laurie (N1YXU), reporting as Orange County ARES Emergency Coordinator, reminded the membership that on Saturday, August 28th, the Ready Rally would be an overview on shelter operations by Tim Bothe of the Red Cross. She announced that on Saturday, September 25th, there would be a Ready Rally special event commemorating the 75th anniversary of ARES with further details to be announced.

Steve (W3AHL) announced that the Fan Dipole Building Party would take place as scheduled on Saturday, August 14th. He also showed everyone the plethora of new radio equipment that will be installed at the EOC and configured into "go-kits."

Ken (KR4FB) gave a report on the previous month's Ready Rally that provided some basic tests of HSMM within the Meadowlands Industrial Park complex [see "July Ready Rally" in this issue]. About a dozen members fanned out all over the park to see if multimedia communications links could be established back to the EOC building, and this was mostly successful. Ken said that the next step would be to focus on diagnostic procedures and attempt greater range. He asked that those interested in becoming part of the club's new HSSM Working Group see him after the meeting.

Lisa (KG4PFB), Orange County ARES Adopt-A-Highway Coordinator, announced that the next highway cleanup would take place beginning at 0800L (8:00AM) on Saturday, September 11th.

Wilson (W4BOH) mentioned that there would be an upcoming Boy Scout event in Carthage NC the October 10th weekend. This is an opportunity for hams to help teach Amateur Radio-related merit badges.

A motion was made and approved to extend free OCRA membership to newly licensed hams regardless of whether or not they passed their exams at an OCRA-sponsored test session.

-Woody K3VSA

Kudos

We congratulate Karen Snyder (KD4YJZ), who got herself promoted from Captain to General at the VE test session held in conjunction with the Cary Swapfest on July 17th. She didn't even have to go through the intermediate ranks of Major or Colonel, either. What an army!

We also congratulate Bruce Meier (N1LN), who once again distinguished himself by way of inclusion on the DXCC Honor Roll in the August issue of "QST," having three hundred and thirty-two (count 'em: 332) countries notched onto his mic and key. Good shootin' there, Bruce!

And finally, we also congratulate our newest OCRA member, Sam Tannous (KJ4VWG), who joined the club at the August Membership Meeting and has already taken an active role by volunteering to be Net Control for one of the Saturday morning ARES training nets. Way to go, Sam!

Another President's QRM

The following, written by DFMA President Wilson Lamb (W4BOH), here reprinted with permission of the author, is from the Durham FM Association's August 2010 newsletter:

Well, we have come through another Field Day, with flying colors! By combining with OCRA, those in both clubs get to participate with more friends, and anyone who wants to operate has many stations and modes from which to choose. As for me, I had good fun on 20 Meter CW, operating with Bruce (N1LN), from the MCU. Two other stations were in the MCU, 80 CW and 10 SSB. Mac (WQ8U) soldiered through most of the evening on 80, and Wayne (KJ4GDW) led the charge on 10 and brought in several other operators.

We also had 40 CW, some other SSB stations, and several stations operating PSK 31. Dee (KU4GC) and M.K. (W4MKR) provided their usual excellent commissary service Saturday night and Sunday morning, keeping hunger away for many participants. Saturday lunch was various leftovers and things from coolers, generously supplemented by Steve (W3AHL), with sandwiches from the kitchen of his motor home, the Field Day Hilton. Steve also ran his genny all weekend, providing computer and fan power to several tent based stations. Joe (K4SAR) provided an air conditioned trailer to house one station.

We had beams, verticals, and dipoles, but the most unusual antenna, or antenna support, was the balloon flown by Bill (W1REP) and Wayne (KJ4GDW), to lift a 135' vertical for 80 and 160 Meters. It made about 100 contacts.

The most rewarding part of the Field Day exercise was the teamwork shown by everyone. Anyone needing help with a rig, tent, or antenna had only to ask, or sometimes just look overloaded, and one or more other hams would appear to help solve whatever problem they were having. Considering the heat and humidity, it took a real effort to pull off setting up communications facilities and their entire infrastructure! Field Day is, after all, meant to be a test of our ability to establish communication facilities under trying conditions, which I'd say we proved we can do!

So what would make Field Day better? MORE PARTICIPANTS. Where were YOU that fine, HOT weekend? We could have used more operators on phone, CW, and digital. There were plenty of old hands to help you get started, even if you had little or no experience, and there were stations unmanned at times, especially late at night. How about coming out next time and helping us wave the ham radio flag. You'll be the better for it, and you'll likely gain some knowledge that will come in handy when you have the opportunity to help out in a real emergency situation. You'll also likely pick up some hints that will help make your operating from home more fun or more effective. If you help set up a station, you'll be able to see what equipment you'll need and how to set it up if you are the one called upon to help out in a time of need.

OUR MCU came through fine, except for a governor problem with the generator. We'll likely be having a work party to pull the genny and try to adjust the governor. If you can find any documentation on a Kohler 7.5R61 generator, we can use it! And speaking of the MCU, you should see some discussion of its setup and operation elsewhere in [the DFMA] newsletter.

Please consider these points carefully, especially with helping the overloaded people trying to keep OUR MCU operable and available to our community. She is in good shape, as far as we know, but can always use additional equipment and routine maintenance. PLEASE come out and help us keep OUR MCU ready to go! Who knows, you may get some tips on how to set up your own home or portable equipment. 73,

-Wilson W4BOH

Cary Swapfest 2010

Subtropical weather conditions were in play this year for the annual Cary Swapfest, held as usual in Ritter Park, just off Kildare Farm Road. It was comfortable in the morning, another reason to get to these events early, but by noon it was really sweltering! Fortunately, the Cary Swapfest is intimate enough that one can make two or three passes through all the vendors in just a couple of hours.

Andy (W4KIL) and Woody (K3VSA) had the pleasure of breakfasting with Dwayne (N4MIO), our newly appointed ARES Area 10 go-to guy, at the Hillsborough Bojangles that morning, and then combined forces with Adriano (KV7D) and Gerry (KD4YJV) to carpool to the 'fest. Many, many familiar faces were seen.

All the folks we talked to said they thought that attendance in the form of sellers was off a bit compared with 2009, but there were still enough tailgaters to make it interesting, and almost everybody in our crowd was seen to be leaving with some sort of purchase or other. Woody purchased for only ten bucks a nice (genuine ICOM) speaker-mic for his U82, thanks in large part to his "personal banker," Dee (KU4GC).

The usual gamut of used equipment was being displayed for sale, some of it lovingly preserved or restored, and some being total basket cases. The Cary club had quite a good bit of estate sale items being offered at oddly varying prices. As usual, our good and faithful friends from DBJ Electronics were also there.

Even if you don't get there early enough to snag the proverbial "good stuff," these events are usually fun if only for the chance to hang out with old friends and put faces to some of the voices you've been hearing over the air, and the 2010 Cary Swapfest was no exception. Coming up: Shelby Hamfest (in Dallas, NC) over the Labor Day weekend!

July Ready Rally

Many of our served agencies utilize Internet-based tools (such as WebEOC) to provide communications during incidents. HSMM-MESH(TM) (High Speed Multi-Media Mesh) can be used to provide back-up Internet connectivity for served agencies during emergencies. During the July 31st Ready Rally, the Orange County, North Carolina ARES group experimented with the use of HSMM-MESH to provide backup connectivity to the Orange County Emergency Operations Center.

HSMM-MESH utilizes off-the-shelf, consumer-grade WiFi access points, running modified, open-source Open Link State Routing (OLSR) firmware, to create a mesh network that can provide an alternative path to the Internet. If any one of the access points can connect to the internet, that connection can be shared with any other access point on the mesh.

After a short presentation on the technology, taken from information found on the following website : www.hsmm-mesh.org, the ARES group divided into teams, and positioned themselves at various locations and distances from the EOC. Each team consisted of a driver, a communications person to talk with the Tactical Net Control, and an individual to operate the portable HSMM-MESH node. The HSMM-MESH node consisted of a modified Linksys WRT54GL router, a laptop, and power supply.

The W4EZ Orange County ARES tactical net was activated in Drill Mode for this exercise, and the teams used established tactical net protocols to communicate information about their ability to reach the internet from their location. Each team would proceed to a location of its own choosing. Once there, the HSMM-MESH node operator would collect information about that location, and fill out a Ready Rally Report form containing such data as: Location, Time, whether the team was in Line of Site of another team or one of the relay points that had been temporarily deployed, whether the team could access the Internet from the HSMM-Mesh node-attached laptop, as well as detailed information from the HSMM-MESH node web pages. Once the data was collected, the team contacted TacNet and relayed the information back to the EOC. After acknowledgment from TacNET net control, the team would proceed to another location and repeat the process.

The July 31st Ready Rally was the Orange County ARES group's first test of the HSMM-Mesh technology. This was very much an experimental "learning" experience, and the teams were not always successful in establishing a connection to the Internet. Some of the issues were equipment related, some appear to be software related, and others might relate to the local terrain as well as obstructions such as trees and buildings. As a learning experience, the exercise was judged a complete success. While the main purpose of the Ready Rally was to provide familiarization with the HSMM-MESH technology, the exercise also developed useful information about internet accessibility across the mesh, propagation of the WiFi signals, and practice in emergency net procedures.

The Orange County ARES organization wants to thank all of the operators for their

participation in the exercise, Orange County Radio Amateurs for the use of the W4UNC repeater, the Orange County Emergency Management organization for the use of the EOC, and general public for their consideration in our use of the roadways and parking lots near the EOC.

-Ken KR4FM

The Next OCRA Meeting

The next OCRA Meeting will take place on Monday, September 13th at 1930L (7:30PM), as usual at the Orange County EOC Building in Hillsborough. In the meantime, join many of us for Saturday morning breakfasts at the Hillsborough Bojangles on South Churton Street beginning about 0930L (9:30AM). See these and other upcoming events on the calendar portion of the OCRA website and become our friend on facebook.

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This edition of the OCRA Newsletter, along with the archive of past issues, can be viewed online at:
www.ncocra.org/newsletters.html