



ORANGE COUNTY RADIO AMATEURS

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

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Board Meeting Minutes

The Orange County Radio Amateurs Board Meeting for September, 2010, began at 1830L (6:30PM) on Monday, September 10th at Casa Ibarra restaurant in Hillsborough. In attendance were the following OCRA Officers and Board Members:

Ken (KR4FM), President
Woody (K3VSA), Secretary
Laurie (N1YXU), Board Member
Bruce (N1LN), Board Member

Also attending were:

Dee (KU4GC)
Justin (KD4CPM)
Lisa (KG4PFB)
Mike (W4DSE)
M.K. (W4MKR)

No reports on the treasury or repeaters were given since Dan (KR4UB) was not present.

Particulars about the upcoming ARES 75th Anniversary party were discussed, and visuals were transferred to Bruce (N1LN) to use in making a slide show. Some technical aspects of the HSMM initiative were discussed. Woody (K3VSA) suggested that it might be time to initiate another order for OCRA/ARES apparel, and it was resolved to ask the membership if there was interest in doing this.

The Board Meeting was adjourned at about 1900L (7:00PM).

-Woody K3VSA

Membership Meeting Highlights

The OCRA Membership meeting for September 2010 was held at the Orange County EOC building in Hillsborough on Monday, September 10th and was called to order at 1930L (7:30PM) by OCRA President Ken Kauffmann (KR4FM). Introductions were made as per custom.

There were no treasurer's report or repeater manager's report since Dan (KR4UB) was not in attendance that evening.

Laurie gave an update on ARES, especially invitations to attend the 75th anniversary celebration taking place on September 25th at the EOC, and ordering 75th anniversary items from the ARRL.

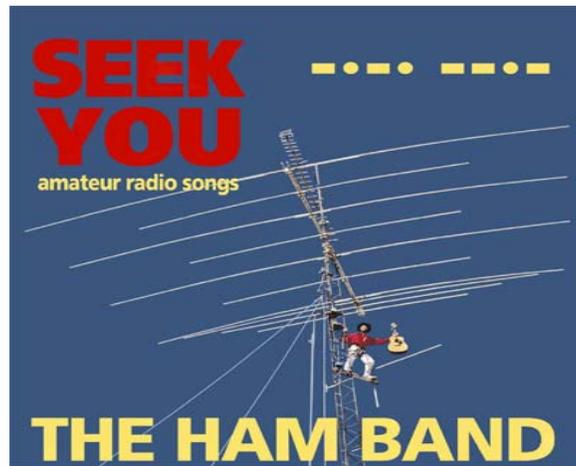


Laurie (NIYXU) presents Sam (KJ4VWG) with his "I Bit the Bullet" certificate in recognition of being a new OC ARES Training Net Control operator

Complimentary 75th anniversary coffee mugs are being ordered to thank Lad (W4ORD) for his exceptional work at the Orange County Speedway event, and Sam (KJ4VWG) for volunteering to be a new Orange County ARES Training Net Control operator. In addition to the coffee mug that Sam will receive, he was also presented with an "I Bit the Bullet" certificate.

A show of hands indicated that quite a few members are interested in having club apparel, so Woody (K3VSA) will contact Chris (K4CPS) to inquire about him producing them.

OCRA was treated to an exceptional presentation by Mac (WQ8U) and Wilson (W4BOH) on classic ham radio gear. Mac led off with a review of transmitters, beginning with 1920s and 1930s breadboard tube equipment. Wilson followed with a capsule history of receiver technology. Photographs and schematics of significant models were shown, and many pieces were actually on hand for members to examine. All of this was preceded and followed by a music video of a European group call "The Ham Band," which featured a song promoting Amateur Radio being performed high up on a tower.



Album cover art from "The Ham Band" collection of songs about Amateur Radio

An portion of the music video from the album can be found online at the band's website:
http://www.hamband.com/html/the_ham_band.html

-Woody K3VSA

Kudos

Congratulations go out to OCRA member Steve Sparrow (KJ4YSZ), who now has his

General as of the last VE session. There is absolutely no correlation whatsoever between Steve bringing fresh Krispy-Kreme doughnuts for all of us VEs and then getting a perfect score on his exam. (Even though we run exams through the auspices of the ARRL-VEC, this is one point where we agree with Gordon West: Examinees are certainly invited to bring doughnuts for the examiners!)

Steve is now studying for his Extra and plans on becoming a VE himself after passing that final exam. Steve, have you heard about that new Krispy-Kreme shop that just opened on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill?

We also congratulate OCRA's own Rob Noell (W7PLJ), who passed his Extra exam at the VE session held during the September OCRA Membership Meeting. Way to go, Rob! You've conquered your final Amateur Radio exam and are now standing on the pinnacle. The view is nice, if I do say so myself!

Lad Carrington Writes...

[It's especially gratifying to me, the newsletter editor, to receive copy from somebody other than myself, but it's really great when that copy comes from a Pulitzer Prize nominee like Lad Carrington (W4ORD). So enjoy! -K3VSA]

Off and on, and more off than on, I have been an amateur radio operator since about 1960 but my interest predated that by a few years. To be exact, the bug bit me in the summer of 1957.

It started with an insatiable curiosity about almost everything and the drive to jump in and get my hands into whatever project was at hand. I owe a lot to my late brother-in-law, Gene and the close relationship we had when I was very young. He was an engineer in the aerospace industry with an acute interest in things electrical and a willingness to show me, and teach lessons that I treasure to this very day. Things like the workings of electrical circuits and how to catch and not fear snakes. So, I was set up and primed, when one day out playing in the vacant lot next to our house, I saw a new neighbor stringing wire down the length of his driveway.

My parents had bought the lot before I was born, to be a playground for my sisters and the two houses and driveways were mirror images, with the lot in between. But I digress.

The previous occupants had been my mother's best friend and her family. Their son was my best friend, so I was not happy when they bought a new house and moved away. I was very interested in what new neighbors we would have, and it didn't make me very happy to hear that they had rented the house to a young couple with no children. I just happened to be playing alone that afternoon and paid little notice to the moving-in goings on, but late in the day I saw the husband uncoiling a spool of wire along the driveway and stretching almost the entire length of the lot. Being nosy, I walked over and asked

about the wire.

He explained that it was an antenna and he was a Ham Radio Operator. He then asked me to help him put the wire up and promised to show me how it all worked, which was just the bait I needed.

By the time we had it in the air, and the lead-in run to the house, it was close to supper time and I sadly had to go home. Both houses had back porches that had been completely enclosed with glass windows. Ours was my mother's sewing room and his was to be the first ham shack I had ever seen. I got inside just long enough to see lots of equipment with tubes and a rack with large air wound coils and other things that our lead wires ran to and more wires than I had ever seen going everywhere. I might as well have just been given access to Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory. It only lacked the arcing Jacob's ladder with a glass ball and lightning rod going through a hole in the roof. He said he would have it all hooked up and be ready about 9:00, and I was invited to come back and see it in operation. I just dragged my sagging lower lip home knowing that my bedtime was between 8:00 and 8:30.

Supper was pleasant, without incident, and I was the best son ever, trying hard to be a picture of perfection. I went to bed at 8:00 without my usual protests. I had a plan.

These houses, while not shotgun houses, were all one level and low to the ground. Bedrooms were all on one side, and front to back. The living room, dining room, and kitchen were all on the other. I was snuggled in my bed and my bedroom windows were an easy access to the ground. For all appearances, I was asleep, but in reality, you couldn't have sewn my eyes shut. A few minutes before nine, I quietly eased my window up, and slipped out to the ground. I made my way around the house and across the dark lot and knocked on the back door. My new friend opened the door and let me in to a brightly lit room with all of the equipment now connected and in the process of being tuned. He told me his name was Cy Soss, he was a new doctor at Duke, and for the life of me I can't remember his call sign. He finished tuning and said, "let's find someone to talk to." Soon he was carrying on a conversation with someone far away and I was watching fascinated. Then, he told the other ham that he had a young guest in the shack named Lad and was going to have me say hello. I was thrilled and told the guy about myself and asked him a few questions, and by then, I was walking about ten feet off the ground.

Soon I began to be a bit paranoid about being gone too long and floated over the ground back to my bedroom window. That night I learned two electrical lessons. One was the spark that ignited a lifelong love of things with electricity running through them and the other was all about TVI.

It seems that as soon as we went on the air, my parents heard the whole QSO over our TV set. When I stuck my head back in the window to climb in, I found myself looking at their stern expressions staring me in the face. After a period of forced incarceration I discovered that they would encourage my interest radio electronics 100%.

My first lesson in circuitry was watching Cy install a TVI filter on our set, and then, over the next few months, I delved into basic circuit construction. Starting with some razor blade radios, then crystal sets, I finally progressed to getting my Dad to order a Knight Kit Space Spanner receiver.

My mother let me turn her sewing table into a temporary workbench, and I laid out all the parts and the large color pictures of the inside of the radio and chassis. Carefully identifying each part by its picture I took an old soldering iron my brother-in-law gave me, and built that radio. I need to mention here, that, somehow I missed the lesson on schematics and instruction books and I built the thing by the pictures. Uncannily, it actually worked and I spent hours and hours listening to the world. I was especially fascinated by Radio Moscow. This was during the Cold War and we lived in a world of bomb fear and air raid drills.

I plodded along and earned all of the Boy Scout merit badges that pertained to radio, electricity, and Morse code, but the next summer's end, as school was starting, I contracted meningitis. My mother had Dr Soss come over to examine me and he had her take me to the hospital immediately. After a long stay in the hospital, and a long slow recovery period, during which I was not active in anything, we planned to move. Late in 1958 we moved to a temporary house near the church we attended and lived there until our new house in north Durham was completed. We moved in during the summer of 1959.

One of my first discoveries in the new neighborhood was that a ham lived a block up the street and from that point on I spent as much time at his house as my own. He was Paul Jacokes (K4RSI). He had a multi-band beam on a tall telephone pole and his shack was in a basement family room with a radio workshop next to it. It was everyone's favorite hangout including mine. Paul helped me study and guided my parents in equipment purchases, and I soon was WN4BCD. He helped me get started with a WWII surplus SX ??? Receiver, and we ordered a Hallicrafters HT-40K transmitter. The transmitter was a kit and when it arrived I worked around the clock putting it together. This time I followed the instruction book.

I was good at tree climbing and putting up dipoles and Paul routed every ham that moved to Durham to me for help stringing wire. My dad even bought me a tall extension ladder for that very purpose. Paul and I remained friends until his passing in the late 70s.

After I completed my year as a novice, I began studying for my general and discovered that the 13 wpm code was a barrier I couldn't break. After a number of tries, I put Ham radio aside and became enthralled with cars and girls, and by 1962, I was hooked on broadcast radio. I worked as an announcer through high school, then went away and obtained a 1st class broadcast engineering license and followed my dream to CA to study Radio and TV Arts and Sciences and pursue a career as a radio announcer and engineer.

Along the way, I had another novice license (K or WN4IEH) for a year and then later one

for two years until I conquered the 13 wpm barrier in 1990 and achieved the elusive General Class, but that is another story.

-Lad (W4ORD)

August Ready Rally

[We'll be featuring the story of both our August Ready Rallies, the one at the Red Cross, and the other at the Orange County Speedway, in the October edition of the OCRA Newsletter. -K3VSA]

Our Rich Ham Heritage

Number 18 of a series

We're celebrating an important birthday this September as ARES, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service, turns 75 years old. Very healthy for its age, too, if I may say so! The idea for a ham radio emergency organization was born back in the September 1935 issue of "QST" with an observation by ARRL Traffic Manager F. E. Handy: "At least one amateur station in every community should be equipped with auxiliary station equipment for use in an emergency."



And with that, the Amateur Radio Emergency Corps was born. There have been a raft of changes since then, including SSB, FM, repeaters, digital modes, WinLink, etc., etc., but one thing that has never changed is the dedication and commitment we hams have for serving our communities in time of need.

The general public tends to believe that modern communications technology can be depended upon to always be there, but we know too well how fragile the cell phone network is and how easily it can be overloaded and made to crash in the event of a real disaster.

Our preparedness is more important now than at many other times in the past. At the same time, the aftermath of 9-11 and Katrina have placed new demands upon us. We're being asked to become more "professional" and more trained, which is difficult for some of our members to understand. They came up in an era when casual preparedness was sufficient, but that era is long gone now.

Orange County ARES has been striving to become more prepared for some time now,

and we will be celebrating ARES' 75th anniversary on September 25th with a party at the EOC. I hope you'll plan on attending.

The Next OCRA Meeting

The next OCRA Meeting will take place on Monday, October 11th 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**

