

# DURHAM FM ASSOCIATION



## November 2010 Newsletter Sidney Edwards W4QWM Reporting

### Tuesday November 2

**MEETING LOCATION:** Our Meeting will be held at Bullocks Barbeque 6:00PM. For more information, see <http://www.dfma.org> Durham FM Association

#### Affordable Winlink

Ken Dufner, KI4QXJ, will talk about his experiences with WINMOR, a free package that attempts to provide a lower cost entry point to Winlink. Winlink provides for email over HF but up until now has required fairly expensive hardware. WINMOR uses a suitable computer sound card and should not require extra hardware, although an external sound interface is recommended. More and more, our served agencies like the Red Cross and the EOC are asking for text rather than voice communications backup.

### President's Corner

Well, another valuable month is gone from our lives. Sometimes I think about how wonderful it is to have the opportunity to do so many great and interesting things but how hard it is to muster the motivation to actually do them! Several people have remarked to me lately that they were realizing that they had many fewer days available to them than they used to and that they were trying to put more into those that remain.

Of course we all have many activities from which to choose, both required and optional. Once the required ones are out of the way, we may be lucky enough to have some time for the optional ones, like ham radio. I've been using my ham time for a few different things; restoring the old wooden rack transmitter some of you have seen, working with Lowell, KK4PH, to maintain/improve the MCU, finishing a big power amp I started 50+ years ago while still a teenager, and, of course, occasionally actually talking to other hams on phone and CW.

When I look at that list, I'm acutely aware of the absence of an important type of activity, LEARNING NEW STUFF. Learning is an important part of hamming, I think, and finding out "who's on the repeater this morning" does NOT count! Are you brushing up your morse skill, studying for the next license, or taking the ICS courses? I'm OK on code and have my Extra, so yes, I finally bit the bullet and started my ICS work. I only have 100 so far, but I've broken the ice and will be going on soon. More and more agencies are saying they'll require volunteers to have ICS training, so we may as well get on with it, even if we are not sure of the value. My take on ICS 100 is that the organizational structure may well lead to better functionality that just letting things develop without a plan.

But ICS is an administrative structure with nothing technical about it, so what do we radio/electronics people do to improve our hands on hardware skills? For my part, I'm trying to get myself going to follow up some of the wonderful digital and WIFI stuff we have heard about in a couple of great DFMA programs. It's harder than my other activities, because the materials are not available in my basement treasure trove bits and pieces.

Everything revolves around access points, routers, software and computers, so I honestly don't take to it naturally, but I'm asking questions and thinking about what to do next. OCRA recently had a demo of the mesh networking that Ken Kauffman talked to us about recently. All the hardware to interconnect computers through wifi and two meter links in a self organizing network was set up and working perfectly. Someone in the audience even sent a message from their smart phone to Ken using the mesh network during the demo! Steve Ahlbom was there too, manning the backstage part of the demo. These guys have made remarkable progress and are happy to pass on their hardwon knowledge to others interested in digital networking.

And then there are the straight digital modes like PSK and RTTY. Several of those can be worked using just a PC, interface cable, and your plain old transceiver. There's no networking, but you can work the world using just a few Watts! Your PC soundcard does the hard work of generating the strange sounding signals needed. There's even a soundcard mode to get you on Winlink, the worldwide system for connecting people in remote locations, like boats, to onshore access points connected to the internet. One of our members has recently brought up Winlink and sent messages through the ham operated servers to people on the internet! I have received several messages from a sailboat near South Africa and Australia.

So let's get going. I'm no expert on any of this, but would be glad to help you find someone to help with whatever you want to try. Let's stretch our brains a bit and ham it up in some areas in which we haven't dabbled before.

It can only make us better and may make us more useful in time of need.

#### Late Items

Lowell and Ben just finished a great trip with the MCU to a Cub Scout

Camporee in Carthage. The MCU worked fine and they showed radio to about 300!! Cubs! Good job! On October 30, the MCU and a number of hams will be helping with the Habitat for Humanity Halloween bike ride. Randy McCray is looking for volunteers, so PLEASE come out and help us show off our capabilities and community spirit. YES, we need YOU. Contact me or Randy ASAP. The command post will be at the ballpark and the event is scheduled to run from 8-4. I'm trying to fill a carpool to the JARSFEST on Sunday, Nov 21. Let me know if you want to go along. We have four of the seven seats filled. Departure is from my house at 0700 and we'll be back late afternoon, depending upon the wishes of the group. They have food!

73, Wilson, W4BOH

## **Durham FM Association (DFMA) Club Meeting Minute 10/5/2010 At Bullocks Restaurant, Recorded by Lowell Tieszen - KK4PH Secretary**

Lowell(KK4PH), Joanna (KE4QOZ), Rhett(KE4HIH), Randy(K4XRM), Dewey(WA4AHR), Sam(KJ4VWG), Charlie(NC4CD), Vic(K0OUX), Bob(W4RWC), MK(W4MKR), Dee(KU4GC), Woody(K3VSA), Don(KE4UVJ), Jim(KI4HQO), Wilson(W4BOH), Linda(KF4LJZ), Sue(KA4AVM), Jim(WB4YYY), Jeff(KI4KKX), Derek(KO4T), JD(WQ8U), Dave(W4SAR), Lad(W4ORD), Donna, Ben(NB4NQH), Sandy(AC1Y), Matthew(KG4DPS), Bob, Ken(KI4QXS)  
Total of 27 hams and 2 non-hams attended for a total of 29.

### **Called to order:**

Wilson called the meeting to order.

### **Reports**

#### **Treasurer's Report:**

CD: ----- Checking: ----- Total -----

#### **Secretary:**

The secretary reported items from the board meeting.

- o MCU Status
- o MCU To Scout Campout at Camp Durant near Carthage, NC

#### **ARES:**

- o Parkwood Pork BBQ Saturday noon until 7pm.
- o Members meeting Saturday, October 9 member's meeting at the Durham County EOC.
- o Durham County Emergency Coordinator Betty Moore, is retiring so will have new contact the first of next year

#### **Repeater:**

- o Switched antenna for 147.225 Repeater and there is much less noise.

#### **Old Business:**

- o Ham-nic planned for October 10, at Rhett and Joanna's. Arrive around 4pm
- o New web site is up. Give any comments to Dee.
- o

#### **Program: Weather**

Jeff Orrock(KI4KKX) presented an interesting and very understandable presentation on weather. Some of the things he talked about were this hurricane season, assessing wind damage, with interesting pictures. Jeff stayed around and answered a number of questions from club members.

### **Meeting was adjourned**

Durham FM Association (DFMA) Board Meeting Minutes – 10/19/2010

Recorded By Lowell (KK4PH)

Attending: Lowell(KK4PH), Rhett(KE4HIH), Paul(WA4OXN), Wilson(W4BOH), Ken(KI4QXJ), Bob(W4RWC), Charlie (NC4CD)

#### **Reports:**

**President – Wilson(W4BOH):** Called the meeting to order.

**Vice-President – Dee(KU4GC):** Absent

**Treasurer-MK(W4MKR):** Absent

**Repeater Manager-Charlie(NC4CD):**

- o There is a problem with low receive sensitivity on the 147.225 repeater. A work day scheduled for this Saturday to work to identify the problem.
- o Question came up about the clubs service monitor. Lowell(KK4PH) and will get to Wilson for evaluation.
- o

**Secretary – Lowell (KK4PH):**

Minutes from the board meeting were distributed, reviewed and approved.

**Action 2010-10-19-01:** Minutes from the 9/21/2010 Board Meeting were approved.

### **Old Business**

#### **DFMA Web Site:**

2010-10-19 – A suggestion was made that plots of repeater coverage for each of the repeater might be able to be included.

#### **MCU:**

2010-10-19:

- o HF Tarheel antenna not yet ordered – NC4CD
- o Permanent CB antenna not mounted – KK4PH
- o Waiting on Marine Radio
- o

#### **ARES:**

No Report

#### **Ham-nic:**

2010-10-19 – 16 or 17 people attended.

#### **Cub Scout Campout:**

Lowell(KK4PH) gave a report the trip he took with Ben Liddy (KB4NQH) to a Cub Scout campout near Carthage, NC. About 300 people went through the MCU in five hours. It would have been better to have four hams. Overall it was a great way to expose Amateur Radio to so many children at a very impressionable age.

**Hamfest:**

There was some discussion of location but no compelling reasons to move location at this time.

**New Business**

**Public Service:**

**Habitat Ride:** Scheduled for October 30. Wilson will be meeting on Thursday with organizers of the event. The ride is North to the VA boarder. The 443.275 (PL100) was suggested as a good repeater. Lowell (KK4PH) and Steve (WA3AHL) will be working to set up APRS to track assets.

Meeting adjourned

**MCU at Cub Scout Campout:**

We didn't know what to expect with an invitation to demonstrate Amateur Radio at a Cub Scout campout at Camp Durant near Carthage, NC. It was a two-hour drive in the MCU (Mobil Communications Unit) on Friday evening, October 8, from Durham to the camp near Carthage. We arrived after dark and began to set up.

We found an ideal spot a little over 60 feet from a light-tower with a generator and in the other direction a pine tree. We strung up antennas and the bands were so quiet being out in the country. It was near midnight by the time we got to bed. In the morning we had breakfast and just finished soldering the last connection when the Cubs arrived in mass at 9:00 am. We had about 200 Cubs through in the morning between 9:00 and 11:30. We made a few adjustments, had a quick lunch, and back to the MCU for the afternoon session which started at 1:30pm to 3:00pm with about 100 people through, there were less because there were more activities to choose from in the afternoon.

With two hams present, we were able to bring the cubs in one pack at a time, or about 10 at once, and explain what amateur radio is, and how it is still of value even with cellphones and the Internet. We were able to tune in on the Boy Scouts at the camp up the road that were making 2-meter contacts through a local repeater.

As is normal with elementary aged guys, some were clearly uninterested, but others were fascinated and showed great interest and asked some very good questions such as how the radio waves could travel to the other side of the earth. Having white-boards in the MCU, I was able to draw the earth, the ionosphere, and explain how the waves bounce between (or refracted by) the two and move around the earth.

We learned some things. It is important at such an event to actually be able to make contacts. Ben (KB4NQH) was outside introducing the cubs to what we were doing and lining them up, and Lowell(KK4PH) was inside the MCU giving the talk. While we had antennas up for 20, 40 and 80 meters - with the demands of talking to the group there was no time to make contacts. A team of four would have been ideal. During the afternoon session, I happened to have a CW key on the table and was getting questions as to what it was. It is important in our presentations to provide information on CW because there is a generation growing up that has very little exposure to what Morse Code is and how it is still used to communicate.

It was 5pm when we were all packed up and headed home and by 7pm we were home. It was a lot of work but it was such a wonderful opportunity to expose Amateur Radio to more than 300 children at a very influential time of their lives.

Submitted by Lowell - KK4PH

**Durham FM Association, Inc.**

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Meets First Tuesday Every Month 6:00 PM