



# THE COUNTY LINE ROADRUNNER

Published Monthly by the Mobile Amateur Radio Awards Club, Inc.



Volume XLVII

December 2017

Number 12

## Musings from W0MU

I hope everyone had a super Thanksgiving Holiday. We had the family Turkey and Brisket this year. I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Happy Holidays and Happy New Year! May 2018 bring you much joy and many last counties!



over for  
Christmas,  
happiness,

I would like to thank and welcome KA3QLF, Scott for volunteering to fill the Great Lakes Director position. He as affirmed at the last board meeting held just before Thanksgiving. Scott will be a great fit to the board.

Condolences to W8TAX and AA8R. Pattie's father passed away recently. My thoughts and prayers go out to you and the family during these difficult times.

We also just received news that long time county hunter and digital guru NX4W, Lloyd passed away recently as well. Rest in peace Lloyd.

The awards processing is coming along but at a slower rate than we all hoped. Apparently, there are 45 steps in completing a LC application once it gets in the hands of the Awards Secretary. Phil was hoping to be completely caught up by Christmas, wouldn't that be a great present for us all!

At our last board meeting K4EXT, Gary, asked if there had been any thought given to updating the awards program to alleviate some of these complications. The answer to date is no, but it is now on the list. Along those same lines is the need to update the program or tools used by the Secretary to manage the renewals and other database entries, corrections et al. If you have any interest in helping the club

### Contents

Awards	6
Board of Directors Meeting	7
Dateline CW	3
FT-8: I'm not really feeling the magic	10
KA3QLF, Scott	8
Musings from W0MU	1
National	5
Treasurer's Report (W7OLY)	9



with either of these projects please send me a email.

The ARRL has announced a new operating activity for 2018 which is working as many grid squares each month as you can. This program is detailed in the December QST. This should be a good activity for county hunters. There is not any real emphasis on activating grid squares which is a let down for some of our more active activators. This will work very nicely with FT8, where the exchange is your grid square. Get ready to rework a lots of stations. I think N1API is still the leader on FT with 2000 or so contacts!

Don't forget about the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary MARAC National in October 2018! I am sure we will be hearing more very soon from K8ZZ.

Safe travels over the holidays and I hope Santa brings you what you are hoping for.

Mike  
W0MU



**Dateline CW**

Ed, KN4Y

County Hunting is a nobile thing; On county lines it lays its wing, CH QRZ is simplicity to sing

I am lounging in the radio shack, next to the space heater, in mock disbelief that the month of December, having 31 days, is the twelfth and last month of the year 2017. During the month of December we remember Pearl Harbor, the start of winter and for kids the Christmas season. I turn on the computer and click on the county hunter news. I read that Jerry, W0GXQ, is the county hunters CW net control of the year, Kerry, W4SIG, is the county hunter CW mobile of the year and Greg, NM2L, is the CW county hunter of the year. I make a mental note to tell Gator about the MARAC county hunter awards when I hear Gator down shift his 4X4 and slide to a stop adjacent to the recycled railroad tie. I hear the crunch of a successful true to its calling Kamikaze squirrel.



heater, in mock days, is the twelfth of December we the Christmas season. news. I read that Jerry,

Gator pushes the radio shack door open with the white cardboard container he is carrying, “Happy holidays Dude, ready for a hot jolt of latte?” Gator reaches into the white cardboard container and extracts two super sized lattes. “Careful Dude, this be hot.” I eagerly grab the cup, hot makes it good and I take a long sizzling sip of the nectar of the gods. Gator asks, “Dude you look sad, what is wrong?” I shake my head, “Another county hunter, Lloyd, NX4W, is a silent key.” “Did you work him?” “Yes, I worked Lloyd a few times when operating mobile in the Georgia QSO party.” We give a latte salute as Gator recites the Irish Blessing.

Gator changes the subject, “Dude how did you do in the 10-10 International Fall CW QSO party and the ARRL Sweepstakes?” I set my latte on the desk, “Well Gator during the 10-10 QSO party I spent a lot of time calling CQ on ten meters. The band conditions were not cooperative and my final total was 7 QSOs. I was stomped by a station in Panama with 34 QSOs.” Gator laughs, “I guess the next ten meter contest you need to move south. How did you do in the ARRL Sweepstakes?”

I sip my latte and fake a sad look, “I had originally planned to operate the weekend and see how much S & P’ing I could accomplish. Unfortunately faith had other plans and I was only able to operate for an hour every once in a awhile. I finally logged 50 QSOs and decided to shut down. I was able to get a short run on 80 meters and I did get one new county on 80-meters. I had great plans that did not materialize, check out my OK/OM contest log, the band conditions were minimal.” Gator sips his latte as he mouses around.

---

Gator shakes his head, “You are correct Dude, the band conditions must have been marginal, and you logged just 21 QSOs. There are many great radio operators from the Czech and Slovak radio clubs who do this contest so lack of interest is not a problem. Gator is staring at the computer, “What is this?” Gator sets his latte down and starts laughing hilariously, “I see you only made one QSO in the Kentucky QSO party.” Gator slaps his leg, he cannot stop laughing. “Settle down Gator that was the only Kentucky CW station I heard. The other operators were frying chicken.” I pretend to look disgusted and sip my latté.

Gator looks at the floor, stoops over and picks up a large white envelope off the floor, “Dude did you know this was on the floor?” I shake my head, “Yes Gator that is the mail you brought into the radio shack the last time you were here, it fell on the floor and I was too lazy to stoop over and retrieve it.” Gator is laughing as he takes out his illegal Ivory handled switch blade knife and slits one end of the envelope as if filleting a trout. He slides a certificate out of the nevelope, “Alright Dude this is a certificate for first place in the 2017 Mississippi QSO party, but it reads, *is declared first place inner in Fl.*” I snort, “Probably a Bulldog took the ‘W’ to the next football game.” We have a good laugh and sip our lattés.

Gator is looking at the computer, “Dude I just opened your LZ DX contest and you made 80 QSOs and I notice you worked non-Bulgarian stations, I though you just worked the LZ Dudes/” I smile, “Well Gator I got on the air, roamed the band, I did not hear many LZ stations calling, so to avoid boredom I worked all stations I heard calling in the contest. This way I had enough activity to keep me awake and active.” Gator picks up a scrap of paper, “Dude what is this Благодаря ви OSO mean?”

Suddenly Gator’s cell phone goes CQ, CQ, CQ, “Sorry Dude the senior center in Crawfordville ran out of Elixir and the shift supervisor is flummoxed by the questions asked. Also the ambient temperature is dropping; I have to get back to the plant to see what happened. A cold and thirsty senior is unpredictable.” He is gone like a hayride romance, I hear him yell; “I will miss you Mel Tillis.” I hear the successful yelp of another Kamikaze squirrel. I shut the door and I hear the printer start then stop. I get the printout; it is a list of mobile calls heard during November on the county hunters CW call frequencies.

I read: AB7NK, AF5CC, AI5P, K2HVN, K2MF, K4YT, K7TM, KA0BA, KA2LHO, KB0LF, KC7YE, N4CD, N4UP, N9JF, N9MM, N9QS, NN9K, W7FEN, W8OP, WA4UNS, WD4OIN, andWJ8Y,

There are no State QSO parties during the month of December, please control your

emotions and rejoice in the fact the ARRL has the 160 meter contest and the unpredictable 10 meter contest. New county hunters operate these two contests hoping to work new counties. There are 26 various CW activities when the weather gets cold and the shack is warm. You might participate in the Croatian CW contest or the ARRL Rookie CW Roundup. Want to swing the beam to the North, try the RAC Canada Winter Contest and/or the renowned Stew Perry Topband Challenge. I make a note that next year I ask MARAC President Mike, W0MU, to appoint a committee to see about getting Santa's Sleigh equipped with a HF radio and help a elf get an amateur radio license. That would be awesome, work all 3077 US Counties in one night. Stay tuned for next year The ARRL 1918 International Grid Chase will be detailed, a natural for mobile county hunters. Nap time, but first:

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**National**

[Here is the start to the 2018 convention - links to hotel - registration etc. to follow on MARAC page..](#)

[Date: October 3 4 5 and 6th, 2018](#)

[Where: Holiday Inn Country Club Plaza](#)

[1 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street](#)

[Kansas City, MO 64111](#)

[816-216-8018](#)

[Ed Eklin K8ZZ 231.649.4747](#)

**Awards**

# Awards Committee

## **MARAC AWARDS UPDATE**

**The road to the Server has been full of potholes. Don't worry; I haven't missed any of them. The awards program involves more than I could have imagined. I have been working with Pattie Hatt. She has been steering me through all the ins and outs of the awards program. We get together when Pattie is not tied up with her customers and I am not on other volunteer tasks. I've already learned so much, but there is still more to learn.**

**The easy part is filling out the application on the logger program and hitting the submit button. Your request is emailed to the MARAC Awards email address. If all of the information in the request is correct (All call signs and name of award must be accurate), then it takes 45 steps to process your application. While the software I use is pretty amazing, processing your application is not a completely automatic procedure. The procedures for the different awards are what I am learning from Pattie.**

**Some items that cause problems with the processing are: letters transcribed in the call signs, mis-spelling of the award name, marking that you want a plaque on one line but saying NO on another line, not forwarding the correct amount of funds to cover your purchase. If you send an application and it is incorrect, please send me an email to delete it. Then send in a correct version. This is the only way to eliminate me from guessing what you want.**

**You don't have MARAC Logger? Oh my. You are cheating yourself out of a lot of wallpaper that the program figures out for you. It is probably the least costly software that you can use to keep track of all your contacts.**

**There is still a lot for me to learn, but I am sure that I will be dependable soon.**

**Phil Yasson**

**Board of Directors Meeting**

Mobile Amateur Radio Awards Club (MARAC)

Wednesday November 22, 2017

President Mike Fatchett (W0MU) welcomed everyone to the BOD meeting and called the meeting to order at 0105z Thursday November 23, 2017

**Board Members present via Uberconference:**

Vice President – Ed Eklin (K8ZZ)

Northeast Director – Al Kaiser (N1API)

South Central Director – Barry Mitchell (N0KV)

North Central Director – Mike Nickolas (NF0N)

Pacific Director – Paul Nelson (N7JPF)

**Members not present:**

Treasurer – Aubrey Mansfield(W7OLY )

Secretary – Terry Dummler (WQ7A)

Past President – Randy Hatt (AA8R)

Southeast Director – Kerry Long (W4SIG)

W0MU informed the board that KA3QLF was interested in filling the position of Great Lakes Director. N1API asked KA3QLF to provide a short bio which he did. No further discussions were held.

N0KV made a motion to affirm KA3QLF as the Great Lakes Director. N7JPF seconded the motion. All were in favor. W4SIG, AA8R, W7OLY emailed the board with their approvals but were unable to attend.

AB7RW was asked to provide a quick update on the status of the Awards Processing which he did. Things were moving slowly and he expected to have the backlog caught up soon.

N1API stated that he had been unable to find a member for his district to fill the Awards Committee position.

N5MLP reported that NM1G was interested. No objections were made.

The formal meeting was adjourned around 0125z by a motion from N1API.

The floor was opened to further comments and K4EXT asked if there were any plans to update or improve the awards processing system. A good discussion was held.

Respectively  
Terry, WQ7A  
Secretary



**KA3QLF, Scott**

MARAC Great Lakes District Director

Hello, I am Scott, KA3QLF. I have volunteered to assist MARAC by sitting in the once vacant Great Lakes District Director seat. I look forward to working with the other directors and officers, as we face the challenges of not only running MARAC, but also keeping the club, and our hobby moving in a forward direction.

A little about myself, I was licensed in December of 1986, at the age of 13. My elmer is my father, NX3Y (formerly WB3KFJ). Unfortunately, he is no longer radio active. My Mom is also licensed, N3ASU but I don;t ever remember her making a qso hihi. If we can remember back that far, the sunspots were what might be the best ever. I fondly remember coming home from school, hopping on 10M as a tech, and making qso after qso all over the country. It was then, I became interested in county hunting. I didn't truly start the chase for another 20 or so years. Beginning in 2008, my USA-CA chase ended in 2010, when I was awarded USA-CA #1196 on Feb 6, 2010. in 2014, I finally completed Bingo. I have previously volunteered to MARAC in the form of the contest coordinator, in 2010, and 2011. I am also the outgoing president of the local Club, SPARK (Scranton Pocono Amateur Radio Klub) I have also served as field day coordinator within SPARK.

I am quite active in the hobby. I participate in many contests throughout the year, including state qso parties and the larger DX contests as well. When not contesting, I can be found in some DX pileups, or more often of late on waterfalls of digital modes, such as FT8, and JT65. I try to watch the spots page and listed to the CW CH freqs, for I would like to continue on the journey of the tiered MARAC awards, such as MG, MP, etc as well as more stars. When I can, I do put out counties, more often than not in one of the mobile friendly contests, such as MARAC weekend, and the PA Qso Party.

While I do not have an agenda nor any plans, I do have some ideas, and I am excited to join this leadership team. Being part of a national club will certainly present a new level of challenges and ideals. I look forward to serving the membership of MARAC, who reside in the Great Lakes District, and welcome any comments, questions, or ideas . Best 73

Scott, KA3QLF





**Treasurer's Report (W7OLY)  
October 2017\***

**Beginning Account Balances October 14, 2017** **\$19,378.42**

**Income:**

Money Market Interest	\$0.39	
Awards Secretary Income	\$0.00	
Misc. Income (1)	\$29.50	
Membership Income	\$684.15	
Logger Distribution	<u>\$40.00</u>	
Total Income:		\$754.04

**Other Expenses:**

Awards Secretary Expenses	\$00.00	
Misc. Expenses (2)	\$1,500.00	
(3)	\$40.34	
(4)	\$396.00	
Office Expenses (Postage, Etc.)	<u>\$44.66</u>	
Total Expenses:		\$1,981.00

**Net Income Less Expenses** **(\$1226.96)**

**New Total Cash Balance ALL Accounts:** **\$18,151.46**

Checking Account Balance		\$ 3,029.57
Money Market Account Balance		<u>\$15,121.89</u>
<b>Total Cash All Accounts:</b>		<b>\$18,151.46</b>

\* Includes Transactions posted through 11/13//2017

\* The \$1,500.00 Awards Secretary Funds are not included in the above balance.

Notes:

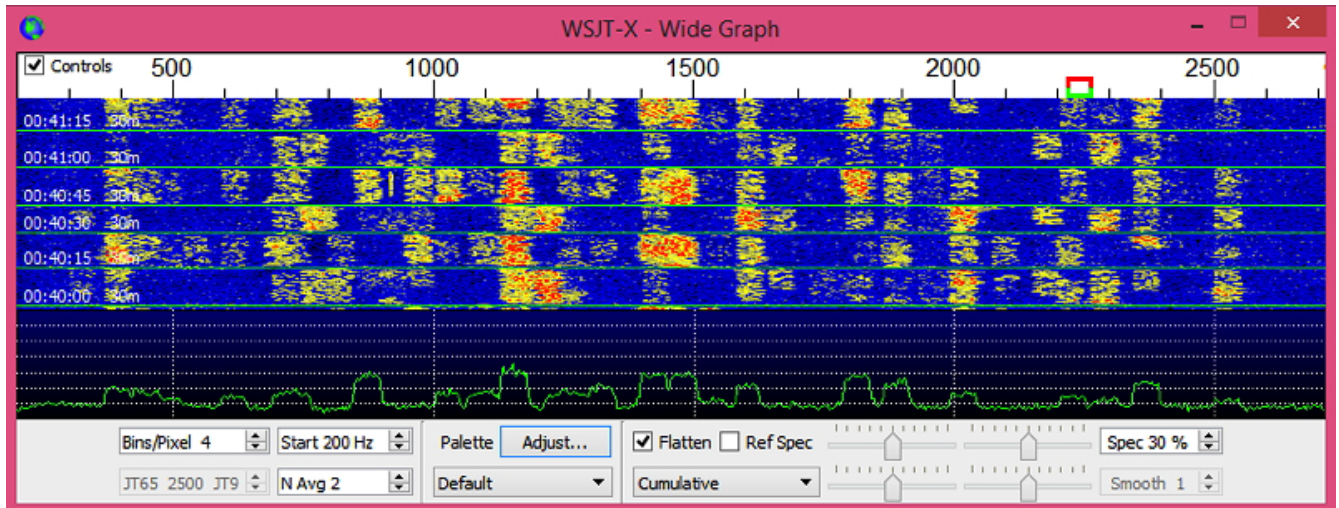
- (1) Close out W8TAX Awards Secretary Account. \$29.50 after final expenses of \$461.66.
- (2) Check to AB8RW to open new Awards Secretary bank account.
- (3) Reimburse WOMU for domain name renewal.
- (4) Mercer Consumer liability insurance.

# From a balance sheet perspective, MARAC Total Funds at the end of August should be discounted by **\$6,290.15**. This amount is a Deferred Liability of award fees pre-paid by members. After discounting, our true (spendable) Cash Assets are **\$11,861.31**.

## FT-8: I'm not really feeling the magic

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU (Guest)

Partly out of curiosity and partly because Jeff, KE9V, shamed me into it, I setup my Signalink interface, downloaded WSJT-X from <https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjt.html>, and started operating FT-8, the latest “shiny object” (as the ARRL dubbed it) from the K1JT team. As you probably know, this mode has really caught on with the digital crowd, and the waterfall is chock full of FT-8 signals. Part of the reason for this is that it has some of the characteristics of JT-65, but is not as excruciatingly slow.



1.

A waterfall display generated by WSJT-X at 7:30 pm, 11/23/17.

Over the past couple of days, I've made 32 QSOs, including a couple of DX contacts. It's been fun to try something new, but to be honest, I'm not really feeling the magic.

Part of it is that I don't feel like I'm really doing anything. I downloaded the software, plugged in my digital interface, fooled around with the settings a bit, and then, the computer started making contacts. I have to click a few on-screen controls to make contacts, but even that's a step that could be easily programmed in by the WSJT-X developers. (In fact, I wonder why they haven't done that already!)



The screenshot displays the WSJT-X v1.8.0 interface. The 'Band Activity' window shows a list of transmissions with columns for UTC, dB, DT, Freq, and Message. A transmission from WA9THI at 1204 kHz is highlighted in red. The 'Rx Frequency' window shows a sequence of transmissions, with the first one from WA9THI highlighted in yellow. The main interface shows a frequency of 7.074 000 MHz, a call sign WA9THI, and a grid EM69. A 'Generate Std Msgs' window is open, showing a list of messages to be sent, with the first one, WA9THI KB6NU EN82, selected.

2.

WSJT-X screenshot. The sequence of transmissions in the Rx Frequency window comprises a contact.

Take a look at the screenshot above to see how a typical contact happens. When a CQ appears in the “Band Activity” window, you double click on it. When you do this, the software begins listening for signals on that frequency. In this case, I double-clicked on the CQ by WA9THI. When I double-clicked on the CQ, the program began decoding signals on that frequency and display the transmissions in the “Rx Frequency” window.

Then, I clicked on “Enable TX” and the program began the contact sequence, sending “WA9THI KB6NU EN82.” EN82 is my grid designator. This is shown as the first yellow line in the Rx Frequency window. The transmissions that I sent are highlighted in yellow. The transmissions sent by WA9THI are highlighted in red.

The sequence of transmissions shown there comprise a complete contact, and that whole process takes less than two minutes. And, once WA9THI received my first transmission, the sequence is all automatic. You just sit there and watch the two computers talk to one another.

While I can certainly appreciate the thought and the work that went into the design of the protocol and programming to implement it, sitting and watching the computers talk to one another just doesn't excite me. On the other hand, if you're one of those guys who wants to make contacts, but doesn't really want to talk to anyone, than this is the mode for you!

Here are a few more notes about FT-8 operation:

- Not surprisingly, synchronizing your computer with the other stations computer is very important.

---

To do that, you need to get your computer to use the network time protocol (NTP). I failed to do this when I first installed WSJT-X, and while my waterfall was full of FT-8 signals, WSJT-X just wouldn't decode them.

- I got my PC laptop to talk ntp by installing Meinberg NTP software (<http://www.ntp.org/ntpfaq/NTP-s-def.htm>). Once I did that, WSJT-X magically started decoding transmissions.
- Most of the cool guys seem to be using Meinberg NTP, but there are other options. One of the guys in our club is using a program called Dimension 4, for example.
- Apparently, you don't have to limit your power output as you would with PSK-31. At first, I set my output power to 10 W. I had a bit of success at 10 W, but I expected more. When I asked on Twitter how much power other guys were using, most of them said that they were using more than that.
- For the last couple of sessions, I've been setting my output power to 25 W, and I've been having more success. I've now worked several Europeans on 30m.
- Even at 25 W, my signal reports are more often than not not as good as the signal reports I'm handing out. I haven't figured this one out yet. This doesn't happen to me when I'm operating CW, so I don't think it's my antenna.
- When I'm operating, I write down the calls of stations I've contacted. The reason for this is that while WSJT-X does have a logging function, it doesn't have a log window, so unless you have a great memory, you could end up working guys two or three times a session. That's probably not a big deal since contacts are so quick, but I'd rather avoid doing that if I can.
- WSJT-X works "split." While most contacts take place on the same frequency, a station can call you anywhere in the passband of your receiver and WSJT-X will decode the signal and begin a contact. This threw me the first time or two that this happened, and I tried to change my transmit frequency to match the other station's. In doing so, I messed up the sequence. I now just let the contact proceed normally, and it works out great.
- When I work the other digital modes, I set my IC-746PRO to the USB-D mode. In this mode, the receive passband is narrower than for working phone. When operating FT-8, however, you don't want to limit that passband. Signals will appear across the entire 2.6 kHz of the USB signal, and if you narrow the passband, you won't be able to work those stations.
- WSJT-X checks the validity of call signs. This afternoon, there was a guy who had typed in his call as "WAMAD" and was calling CQ. WSJT-X wouldn't let me answer that CQ.
- Operating this mode opens up the possibility of working more stations whose callsigns spell words and adding those QSL cards to my collection. I have, for example, already worked K1GUY, N4HER, and N5SLY. I'm guessing that these guys don't operate CW.

All told, I've found this to be an interesting foray into a new digital mode. While I'm not feeling the magic that some others seem to be feeling when operating FT-8, it certainly will be a change of pace to operate this mode from time to time. Give it a shot and tell me what you think.

---

Dan, KB6NU, is the author of the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides and blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com. When he's not working FT-8, he teaches ham radio classes and operates CW on the HF bands. You can email him at [cwgeek@kb6nu.com](mailto:cwgeek@kb6nu.com).

**Awards Committee**

**These MARAC members are serving on the Awards Committee:**

**Awards Manager - Ron Clift (N5MLP)**

**Robert Woody - N8KIE**

**Tony Mazzocco -WA9DLB**

**Robert Hallock - K7TM**

**Bob Voss - N4CD**

**Jack Jacobs - WD4OIN**

*The County Line Roadrunner*  
*MARAC Secretary*  
*PO Box 500*  
*Yelm, WA 98597*

*“A Road Runner Is A Very Fast Bird”*

**Monthly Deadline for Articles is the 25<sup>th</sup>!**

---

**Board of Directors**

**President:** Mike Fatchett, W0MU, PO Box 3500, Parker, CO 80134, 303-548-7222, w0mu@w0mu.com

**Vice-President:** Ed Eklin, K8ZZ, 1426 SW Summit Woods Dr Apt 3, Topeka, KS 66615, 231-649-4747, ed.eklin@gmail.com

**Secretary:** Terry Dummler, WQ7A, PO Box 500, Yelm, WA 98597, 360-894-3715, wq7a@comcast.net

Dues with an Electronic copy of the Newsletter copy are \$10.00 per year, check or money order. Dues are also available via PayPal to WQ7A@ARRL.NET

**Treasurer:** Aubrey Mansfield, W7OLY, 7717 Forest Park Dr, Olympia, WA 98502, 703-286-9987, w7oly@comcast.net

**Great Lakes Director:** Scott Petty, KA3QLF, 2063 N Turnpike Rd, Dalton, PA 18414, 570-687-6173, ka3qlf@comcast.net

**North Central Director:** Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, 316 East 32nd St, South Sioux City, NE 68776, 402-494-6070, nf0n@arrl.net

**Northeast Director:** Al Kaiser, N1API, 194 Glen Hills Rd, Meriden CT 06451, n1api@cox.net

**South Central Director:** Barry Mitchell, N0KV, 12200 Boothill Dr, Parker, CO 80138, 303-841-6510, n0kv@earthlink.net

**Pacific Director:** Paul Nelson, N7JPF, 3013 W. 10th St, The Dalles, OR 97058, 509-698-6227, n7jpf-paul@charter.net

**Southeast Director:** Kerry Long, W4SIG, 1854 Newton Nook, Collierville, TN 38017, 901-331-1881, kerrylong@comcast.net

**Immediate Past President:** Randy Hatt, AA8R, PO Box 427, Grant MI 49327, 517-812-9468, aa8r@aol.com

**Appointees**

**Awards Manager:** Ron Clift, N5MLP, 10719 Lake Windcrest Dr, Magnolia, TX 77354

**Awards Secretary:** Phil Yasson, AB7RW, 13208 NE 5th Ave, Vancouver, WA 98685, 360-213-8297, pyasson@pacifier.com

**Historian:** Gary Beam, K4EXT, 195 Nanny Goat Hill Rd, Elizabethton, TN 37643, ch2@k4ext.com

**Newsletter Editor:** Dave Hyatt, KU4YM, 159 Schooner Bend Ave, Summerville, SC 29486, 843-442-8666, dhyatt@homesc.com

**Sunshine Coordinator:** Pat Reiner, KM6QF, 16931 Aldon Rd, Encino, CA, 91436, 213-999-0100, lovedoxies@aol.com

**Webmaster:** Mike Fatchett, W0MU, PO Box 3500, Parker, CO 80134, 303-548-7222, w0mu@w0mu.com

**Custodian, Club Call, K9DCJ:** Joyce Boothe, WB9NUL, 21175 FM2556, Santa Rosa, TX 78593, 956-202-3373 joycenul@aol.com

**Election Coordinator:** Don McMinds, K7DM, 535 E Chance Ala Mer NE, Ocean Shores, WA 98569, 360-289-0520, k7dm@centurylink.net

**MARAC General Counsel:** Bill Morgan, K0DEQ, 12012 County Rd 3000, Rolla, MO 65401, 573-465-5405, k0deq@arrl.net

**Computer Data Manager:** Gene A Olig Sr, KD9ZP, W 4325 4th St Rd, Fond du Lac, WI 54937, 920-923-0130, kd9zp@att.net