

Public Service on Two Wheels

The Motorcycling Amateur Radio Club

Public Service Editor Bob Josuweit, WA3PZO, was under the weather this month and was unable to prepare his column. Filling in as guest columnist is Contributing Editor Gordon West, WB6NOA.—W2VU

Celebrating its 15th anniversary this coming May, the Motorcycling Amateur Radio Club (MARC) combines the hobbies of motorcycling and ham radio, while providing public-service communications for various events. Based in southern California, the organization has grown to include chapters around the United States (see "MARC on the Net" sidebar), although the original chapter appears to be the most active.

Because of MARC's mobility and the fact that each motorcycle rider is a licensed ham radio operator, MARC members are regularly asked to provide support communications for a multitude of charitable and public-service events. One exam-

ple, according to founder and Chairman Ray Davis, KD6FHN (photo A), was last year's Los Angeles/Orange County Tour de Cure bike event, tending to bicyclists with everything from flat tires to minor road rash incidents.

A typical year's events calendar for MARC looks something like this:

- April—Gearing Up for Abused Kids ride, which benefits sending kids to camp
- April—Thousand Oaks area Tour de Cure (to fight diabetes)
- May—Southern California Tour de Cure
- June—The BAD Ride (Bikers Against Diabetes)
- October—MS 150, benefitting Multiple Sclerosis
- November—"Love Ride" (benefits Muscular Dystrophy, Read by Nine, and several other charities).

Last April, Davis notes, MARC members in Texas worked the MS 150 Ride, which drew approximately 13,000 bicyclists, along with 4,000 volunteers. Other MARC chapters throughout the United States work with other charities as well as the MS 150 and Tour de Cure Rides, offering the ability to move along the course without disrupting the flow of bicycle traffic.

"The participants in the events we cover depend on our MARC motorcycle riders and support/rescue vehicles, which are always in the right place in the right time, to assist them when they need help," com-

*c/o CQ magazine
e-mail: <wa3pzo@cq-amateur-radio.com>

†Contributing Editor, CQ
2414 College Dr., Costa Mesa, CA 92626
e-mail: <wb6noa@cq-amateur-radio.com>



Photo A—Ray Davis, KD6FHN, founder of the Motorcycling Amateur Radio Club (MARC), stands next to his packed-full-of-radios Honda Gold Wing. (Photos by the author)

MARC on the Net

There are several websites dedicated to MARC and its chapters (although most chapter sites look like they haven't been updated recently—ed.):

MARC homepage: <<http://marc-hq.org>>

MARC mailing list: e-mail <marc@nxport.com>

Chapter websites:

Bay Area MARC local site: <<http://ba-marc.org>>

East Coast MARC site: <<http://www.eastcoastmarc.org>>

Illinois Wisconsin MARC site: <<http://www.angelfire.com/sports/marc>>

ments Davis, who, like many MARC members, is a former public-safety officer.

"We always appreciate the help of our MARC members volunteering to make each of these charity events a success. Please volunteer to ride with us on as many of these events as you can," adds Davis, proudly showing off his gleaming motorcycle loaded with ham radio and GPS/APRS navigation equipment.

Each month MARC members report their charitable rides and two-wheel adventures in an eight-page double-sided newsletter that is an absolute kick to read. By the time you finish it, you are ready to jump on your own motorcycle and head out—anywhere—and if you don't own a motorcycle, you are ready to buy one on the spot.

Fully-Equipped Bikes

Ray indicates that nearly all MARC members ride with a minimum of a dual-band transceiver, with many having triband sets and a growing number of members going with detached-head high-frequency (HF) radios as well (photos B and C). MARC maintains a database of helmet wiring sets to allow their members the safest way to operate the radio equipment, their intercom, and their APRS mapping, without compromising safe operation of the motorcycle. Like many other public-service ham groups, they have standardized their power connectors with the Anderson PowerPole (photo D). Most MARC members monitor 144.370 MHz simplex, with a 100.0 Hz CTCSS tone.

MARC members endorse the NCG Company's line of Comet HF, VHF, UHF, and multi-band antennas. Comet's universal mounts will fit nearly any type of motorcycle installation, and MARC members report they have had excellent cooperation from the company in designing antennas that will withstand the additional stresses of operating from a motorcycle.

The most popular choice of VHF/UHF equipment appears to be the Kenwood D-700, tied in to Garmin GPS mapping receivers. Some Garmin units will also show nearby APRS "hits" on the screen. MARC also provides a list of custom cables through one of its members, Chuck, KG6NJP (KG6NJP@pacbell.net). The MARC newsletter contains a full page of motorcycle brackets and stainless trunk rack plates to keep members from cracking the trunk lids when installing larger HF antennas. The plates fit under both the tubular and flat racks on the 1500 and 1800 Gold Wings.

If you ride a motorcycle and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow cyclists providing comms at charity events throughout the country, I recommend joining Motorcycling Amateur Radio Club. Dues are only \$12/year. A membership application may be downloaded from the club's website (see "MARC on the Net" sidebar) or requested by mail from MARC, 3 Lindberg, Irvine, CA 92620-3367. 73, Gordo, WB6NOA



Photo B—Radios and other devices, such as GPS receivers and personal digital assistants, are mounted to be safe yet in easy view.



Photo C—Ray has mounted all of his radios in the rear of his bike, putting only remote heads up front.



Photo D—Anderson Power Pole connectors make for easy power hookups and—with the plugs used as a standard by club members—easy swapping of radios as well.