



P.O. Box 6421 Auburn, CA 95604

October 2018

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**At The Key of SFARC:**

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**VICE PRESIDENT**

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Brian Gohl, AI6US

**FIELD DAY CHAIRMAN**

Gary Frerking, KC3PO

**REPORTERS**

Satellites: Greg, KO6TH  
Sunshine: Richard, WA6RWS

**GROUPS io**

Dennis Gregory, WU6X

**PIO**

Carl Schultz, WF6J

**REPEATERS**

145.430 (-0.6 MHz/PL 162.2)  
440.575 (+5.0 MHz/PL 162.2)  
223.860 (-1.6 MHz/PL 110.9)

**CLUB NET**

Thursdays, 7:30PM, W6EK/R  
145.430

**CLUB MEETINGS**

Second Friday of the month,  
7:30PM at the Auburn City Hall,  
1215 Lincoln Way, Auburn CA

**CLUB BREAKFAST**

Last Sat of the month at Mel's Diner  
1730 Grass Valley Hwy, Auburn 7:30AM

**NET CONTROL OPS**

Dave Jenkins, WB6RBE  
Casey McPartland, W7IB  
Bob Brodovsky, K6UDA  
Al Martin, NI2U

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Barbara Anderson, W6EVA  
anderson51@wavecable.com

**WEBMASTER:**

Herb Garcia, KM6JBI

**VOLUNTEER EXAMINER**

Al Martin, NI2U



**Calendar of Events**

**October 7<sup>th</sup>:**  
*Cystic Fibrosis  
Cycle for Life*

**October 12<sup>th</sup>:**  
*Club Meeting*

**October 20<sup>th</sup>:**  
*JOTA*

**October 27<sup>th</sup>:**  
*Club Breakfast*

**October 31<sup>st</sup>:**  
*Halloween*

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## SOTA? Sure I'll have a can of that

*By Bob Brodovsky – K6UDA*

September 20th 2018: Birton Gilbert N6UG along with Dennis Gregory WU6X (our expedition leader) and I set off at 'O' dark thirty for a mild hike through the Sierras to the Sierra Buttes Lookout Tower located outside Sierra City CA. This little hike wasn't simply to see the beautiful views atop the 8600 foot peak; we were going for a mission. The lookout tower (AKA) WS/NS-139 is listed as an official peak on <http://www.sotawatch.org>.

SOTA, or Summits On The Air is probably as close as you'll get to an actual sport in ham radio. There are two categories of SOTA participants. CHASERS - Those who attempt to make a contact or QSO with ACTIVATORS - Those who climb the peak and attempt to initiate those contacts. Peaks are awarded points from 1 to 10. WS/NS-139 is an 8 point peak and has only been activated a handful of times. We would soon learn why.

Our day started out with all the excitement of a field day at some new unknown location. As we neared the lookout, its appearance looked pretty daunting. A tiny fire lookout perched atop a huge craggy mountaintop which appeared as unapproachable as Mt. Everest must have been to first time climbers.

We were the first car to reach the main parking lot to the main hiking trail. That trail, is supposedly a mostly mild 4 mile hike through some beautiful mountain forest to the base of the peak. After discussing the route for a few minutes, we opted to drive on to a supposed jeep trail that would take us directly to the base of the peak and shave off about 2 miles and a couple of hours off of our trip up.

The jeep road was well maintained layered with soft loose dirt and rock with a consistent 30 to 40 degree incline. No problem for Dennis's Jeep Cherokee until with the sun rising directly in our eyes we met an obstacle that caused us to reconsider this plan. We decided to park the jeep along the trail and go the rest on foot. I mean, how hard could it be? It should only be a mile or two further. Right?



0800 Hrs: We had planned to summit around 1000 Hrs so we could setup our stations and be on the air at 1100 Hrs. Beginning our hike at a little under 7500 feet elevation loaded with backpacks containing radios, antennas, cameras, food, water and some “just in case” items, we immediately felt the impact of our decision. The hike was slow, deliberate and painful. As Birton put it about an hour in, “The Ox is slow and the earth is patient”. We stopped to rest about every 100 feet or so. The incline was much more intense than one would consider for a casual day hike and made footing fairly hazardous. The thinning air played hell with our lungs. Our packs, fully loaded weighing in between 25 to 30 lbs, dug into our shoulders and became uncomfortable burdens on an already grueling trek up a trail which was not designed for pedestrians.



Approximately three hours after beginning our journey up the mountain we reached a wooden sign nailed to a tree that proclaimed “lookout 1/2 mile”. Dennis was worried about his 1100 hr activation time and decided to go ahead of Birton and I at one of our rest stops. Birton and I rested for about 10 minutes and continue on at our Ox pace. Each time I thought, we should be able to see it now, we came upon another switchback on the trail. It became disheartening. At some point along the route, my Kenwood D74 crackled to life. Dennis was near the summit. Then another voice; this one from Richard, WA6RWS back in Sacramento, close to 100 miles away. Then another ham chimed in from Mt. Diablo probably 200 miles away. If I wasn’t so exhausted I would have been thrilled to be making contacts on simplex from a handheld at that distance.

Birton and I made the summit about 20 to 30 minutes after Dennis. But there was one final obstacle, a daunting staircase ladder partially suspended over a 3000’ drop off to the actual lookout tower. In actuality it was probably no more than another 200 to 300 foot climb but staring almost straight up it looked near impossible and felt like certain death. After resting for a few minutes and attempting to catch my breath, I began the slow arduous climb up the staircase. It was slow, methodical and I was scared as hell. Birton decided to operate from the base as it was within an approximate 30’ radius of the tower.

Once up at the top, holding onto metal pipes and hand railing for dear life, I unpacked my gear and thought about an antenna deployment. There was a craggy rock outcropping about 25’ to the north. Dennis had climbed out onto that outcropping and deployed his antenna using his multitool as an anchor. I wasn’t about to try anything like that. Dennis was already making contacts on 20 meters. “Louisiana” he exclaimed as he continued to pound out CQ on his KX3 at 15 watts. I climbed up to the top of the tower tied off the balun, dropped the feed line to our operating position and returned. Fearing the 3000’ drop located just a few arms lengths from me I decided to simply throw my end fed antenna over the cliff and hope for the best.





I was testing out the new Xiegu X5105 for a review. I had high hopes of making some contacts from atop the world. I called CQ on voice and heard Jim WA8MPA. I tried contacting him but it was mostly hash. I was transmitting directly into a rock and had no propagation beyond that. For the next hour I tried in vain to reach someone off the mountain to no avail. I hiked all this way only to crap out in the end. I listened to my D74 as Birton had a small pileup going on 2 meters. I felt pretty humiliated.

It was now 1330 Hrs. Dennis & I discussed swapping my radio onto his antenna but we needed to get off the mountain if we had any chance of making it back to the Jeep by nightfall. We reluctantly packed up our gear and headed down the summit to meet up with Birton, who was now flying his drone and making some epic photographs. The hike down the hill was no less painful but for another reason. The steep decline played hell with everyone knees. After another two and half hours we reached the Jeep. Although I failed at making the SSB contacts I planned on, our first SOTA trip was a success. It delivered a big can of wupass but we made it.



# Club Picnic

## Saturday Sept 22, 2018





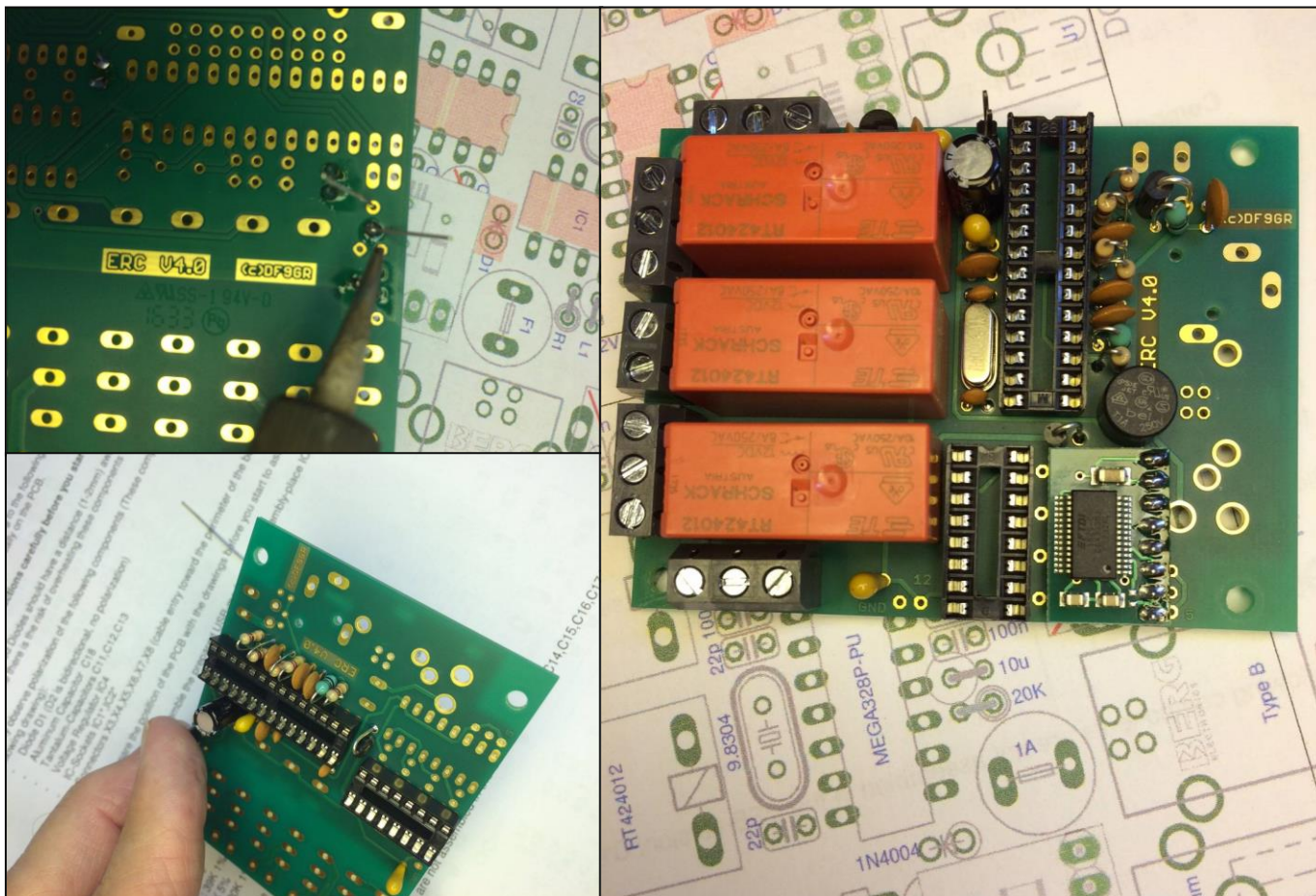
## Build Something

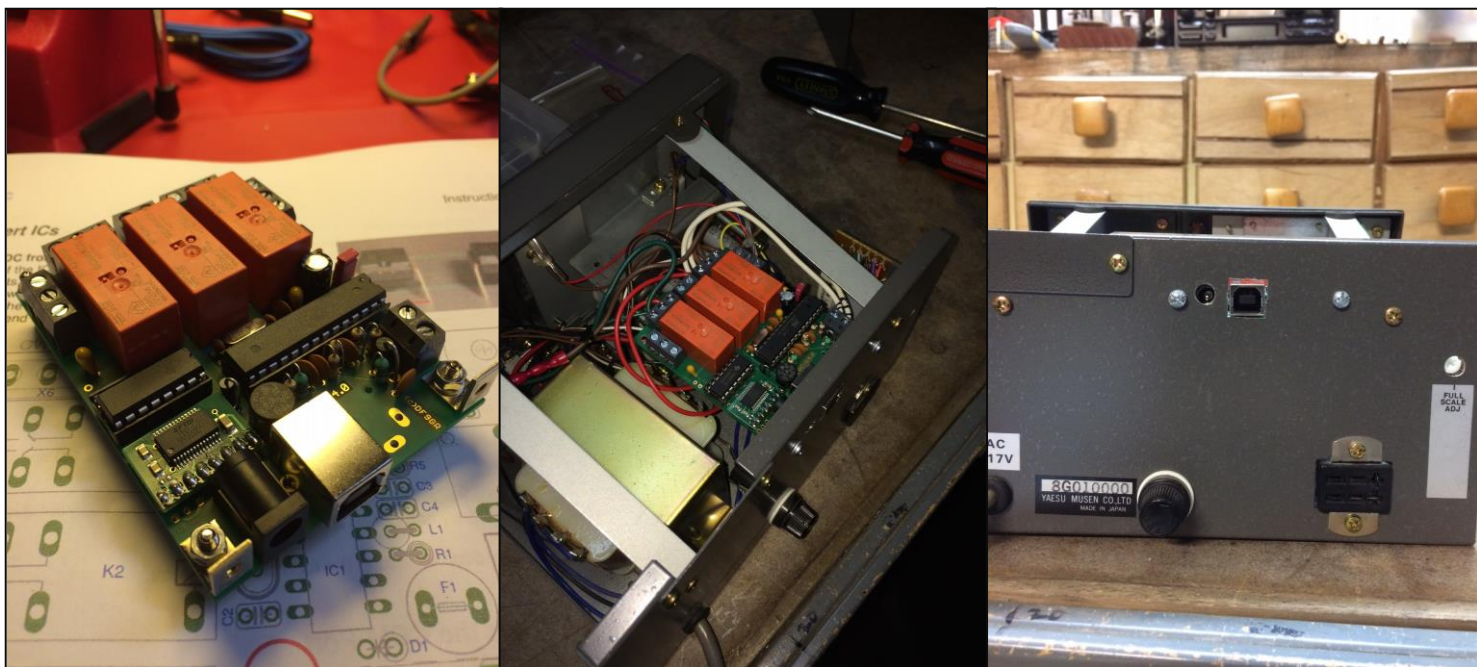
By Dennis Gregory, WU6X

If you have a rotor that you might like to control with your computer or logging software, the **ERC Easy Rotor Control** unit might be just the ticket. I just finished building, testing, calibrating and installing the ERC kit, sold through Vibroplex, in my Yaesu G-800S control box ... it works perfectly. The kit is engineered in Germany, so you can imagine the precise construction; the instruction manual and calibration software are good too. I chose to build the "kit", but a fully-assembled and tested board is available. Check the Vibroplex website under ERC to check compatibility for your rotor control box.

Once calibrated, the control software presents a compass on your computer screen where you manually or automatically control the rotor with your mouse. Presets are available for "park" and a favorite position. Or, just point and click the compass and your rotor will go there. As you hover the mouse pointer over the compass, the bearing is presented in a little window, making precise control possible. Or, you can just type in the window ... very versatile.

The kit requires intermediate-level building skills, in my opinion. It was great fun to put it together, but if you are not very good at soldering, opt for the assembled version. Components are old-school discrete with the only surface mount part soldered for you on a small daughter board. Two IC's are socketed. The software interfaces to popular logging programs like N1MM and HRD as well. I've included a few pictures for you to get a feel of the kit complexity. Notice I mounted the board near the top of the control box, rear panel to avoid other components in the case. A "nibbling" tool was used to make a square hole in the sheet metal for the USB connector.





Here is what you get with this unit:

- USB connected point-and-click control of almost any ham rotator, HyGain/CDE, all Yaesu, Create, Daiwa, ProSisTel
- Software included and/or use with popular logging/control programs
- Programmable stops, offsets, overlap support, speed function
- Windows XP/Vista/7/8/10 32/64 bit
- PC board mounts inside rotator control box
- USB cable included
- \$99 as a kit or \$129 assembled

To sum up, this is a fun kit to build and I now enjoy hands-free control of my rotor with the click of a mouse. No more holding a control button in, or forgetting to stop the rotor while distracted. eHam ratings are 5/5. And, I highly recommend this unit if you are looking to upgrade your old rotor control box or add automated, rotor control to your station.

73, Dennis, WU6X







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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES September 14, 2018



The SFARC Board meeting for September commenced at 1800 hours at the Mel's Diner restaurant in Auburn.

**Roll Call:** All officers and Directors were present. Guests included Richard-WA6RWS, Al- NI2U, Doug-W2VX, Andrew-K6OP and Toni-KK6JPJ.

### REPORTS and DISCUSSIONS

**President's Report:** Orion-AI6JB submitted the agenda and asked for officer, board and committee chair reports.

**VP Report:** Mike-KK6GLP had nothing to report.

**Secretary's Report:** Bruce-K6BAA had nothing to report.

**Treasury Report:** Sharron-KK6RGV submitted her financial report to the board.

### OTHER DISCUSSIONS

**Repeater:** Richard-WA6RWS advised the repeaters are working. Advised we are still waiting for a response from the school district regarding the repeater lease.

**Membership:** Richard-WA6RWS advised membership now stands at 117.

**Nominations:** Carl-N6CKV will announce the names of the member candidates at the general meeting.

**VE:** Al-NI2U gave the results of the most recent VE session.

**Events:** Mike-KK6GLP advised the Cystic Fibrosis Cycle for Life is October 7<sup>th</sup>.

**WEB:** Herb-KM6JBI per email, advised all is well with the web site and server. He is studying online courses to help design the web application project and is still waiting on the board's decision on the feather banner proposal.

**JOTA:** To take place at Beale AFB October 20/21.

**Club Picnic:** September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 10-2PM at Applegate park.

**Christmas Party:** December 15<sup>th</sup>, at the Auburn VFW Hall. Chip-KM6MDF's wife Pam will chair the Christmas party and will be assisted by Barbara-W6EVA.

**Groups io/Contests/DX :** Dennis reported per email:

1. Groups.io still hovering around 122 members. Good stuff getting posted and little maintenance required on my part at this point. Non-members can post, but the post must be moderated before the going "live".
2. Contests: September is about done, but October has the annual California QSO Party, one of our favorites. November is CW Sweepstakes (Oct 3 to 5th) and Phone Sweepstakes (17th to 19th)
3. DX Report: DX been spotty due to band conditions, although there are a few "special event" stations to pick out. Most popular this month is the Route 66 "on the air" special event until the 16th. Calls are all "1 by 2" calls; hard to miss, both on CW and SSB.

**Feather Banner:** Orion-AI6JB distributed banner proposals to the board and different options were examined with the results to be presented to the membership.

**Club Insurance:** Sharron-KK6RGV had the policy reflect 120 members. Orion brought up a liability concern for non-members participating in club actives, for example riding in a SAG vehicle. He recommended that non-members not participate.

**Field Day:** Brian-AI6US discussed the forthcoming committee meeting to explore field day location alternatives. The first meeting is TBA.

**Hamfest:** March 16<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Meeting adjourned at 1846. Submitted by *Bruce Anderson, SFARC Secretary*



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## GENERAL MEETING MINUTES September 14, 2018



The SFARC General meeting for September commenced at 1930 hours at the Auburn City Hall Rose Room, President Orion-AI6JB presiding. All Officers and Directors were present. Orion led approximately 42 members and guests in a Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. An introduction of Officers, members and guests followed.

### **REPORTS:**

**President's Report:** Orion briefly discussed the agenda and reviewed this evening's board meeting. Orion reviewed the board meetings feather banner proposal.

**Vice President's Report:** Mike-KK6GLP reviewed upcoming presentations and events.

**Secretary's Report:** Bruce-K6BAA requested input for the club newsletter; advised a welcome letter was available for new members and guests, and a reminder to the membership to sign the attendance sheet.

**Treasurer's Report:** Sharron-KK6RGV reported on the club's finances.

**Nomination Committee:** Carl-N6CKV in Rich-AA6RS's absence, announced Novembers election candidates'. Each candidate when named gave a short speech why they are running.

- **Board:** Dustin-W6YUE, Gerry-WA6E, Greg-KO6TH
- **Treasurer:** Jeff-KM6RGO
- **Secretary:** Michele-WH7QC
- **Vice-President:** Brian-AI6US
- **President:** Orion-AI6JB

**Repeater Report:** Richard-WA6RWS reviewed the repeaters status.

**Membership:** Richard-WA6RWS advised membership now stands at 117.

**VE's Report:** Al-NI2U gave the results of the most recent VE session.

**Events:** Mike-KK6GLP advised the Cystic Fibrosis Cycle for Life is on October 7<sup>h</sup>. White Elephant sale will be during the October's club meeting.

**Refreshments/Drawing:** Chip-KM6MDF handled this evening's refreshments. A refreshment chair is still needed as Chip is volunteering on an interim basis. Doug-KM6QET reviewed the evening's prizes.

**ARES:** Carl-N6CKV updated members on ARES activities and advised the next meeting to take place November 3, 2018.

**JOTA:** Orion-AI6JB advised the event to take place at Beale AFB October 20/21.

**Club Picnic:** September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 10-2PM at Applegate park.

**Christmas Party:** December 15<sup>th</sup>. Chip-KM6MDF's wife Pam will chair the Christmas party and will be assisted by Barbara-W6EVA.

**Presentation:** Joe Spier-K6WAO, President, Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation (AMSAT) gave an informative and well received presentation on amateur radio satellite activities. Afterwards, Carl-N6CKV made a motion to donate to AMSAT \$ 100. Seconded by Sharron-KK6RGV, the motion passed unanimously.

**General Announcements:** The Club Net meets every Thursday at 7:30pm; Board and General Meetings occur on the 2nd Friday, Board meeting is held at **Mel's Diner** in Auburn, and General meetings at 7:30pm at **Auburn City Hall**. The Club breakfast is held on the last Saturday at **Mel's Diner** in Auburn; an Elmer Net is held the first and third Wednesday night at 7:30pm on the 2m repeater. See [www.w6ek.org](http://www.w6ek.org) for more information.

Meeting adjourned at 2100. Submitted by *Bruce Anderson, SFARC Secretary*

## Loose Parts by Dave Blazek



"See, I told you they couldn't use those things.  
He didn't even say 'over' when he was done barking."

**SIERRA Foothills Amateur Radio Club**

P.O. Box 6421, Auburn, CA 95604

**2018 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Call: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Call: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cellphone: \_\_\_\_\_ Application is New / Renewal (circle one)

ARRL member? Yes / No (circle one)

**DUES / DONATIONS:**

Membership: yearly \* \$22.00 or 20.00 X how many years \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \*\*\* see below Multi-year Discount

Associate: yearly \$7.00

Repeater Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Auto Patch Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter Booster: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Misc. Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Christmas Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name Badge \$10 or \$15 (circle one) \*\* see below for type of badge requested Name on Badge \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Please add \$1 if paying via PayPal**

\* Prorated dues for NEW Members / Associates Only

July	\$ 20 /6	October	\$ 14/3 + following year
August	\$ 18/5	November	\$ 12/2+ following year
September	\$ 16/4	December	\$ 10/1 + following year

\*\* Clip Badge = \$10; Magnetic Badge = \$15

\*\*\* Multi-year DISCOUNT membership \$20 per year for 2 or more years (New or renewal)

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Treasurer: \_\_\_\_\_ Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_ Roster: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment: \_\_\_\_\_ Check Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Cash: \_\_\_\_\_ PayPal: \_\_\_\_\_