

*Bryce & Jenny Myers*

## THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Ham radio operators keep things running smoothly

For years, from her perch atop the start line scaffolding where she assisted with race communications, Jenny Myers marveled at the view. “You see all those thousands of people jammed together and all of a sudden, when the gun goes off, it’s like they all come to life,” she says.

Jenny doesn’t climb the scaffolding any more. But the excitement of the Cooper River Bridge Run and Walk remains as she and her husband, Bryce, continue to play important roles in the event’s communication needs.

It began with the very first race in 1978. Someone had the idea to invite the local ham radio club to provide the necessary communication from the start line to points all along the course. “Jenny and I were among the helpers at the first race, and we have been there almost every year since,” says Bryce.

That first year, the Holiday VHF Society—the amateur radio club named after the position of the repeater antenna atop the round Holiday Inn on Highway 17 just across the Ashley River—volunteered to maintain commu-

nication along the race route. Since, the name of the club has been changed to the Charleston Amateur Radio Society, with its repeater antenna now located on the U.S.S. Yorktown. But the club’s role has not changed: transmitting information to the race director from every half mile along the course. “We have club members

looking for people who may be in trouble or need medical assistance,” says Bryce. “We are all over the course with communications personnel for whatever the race officials need.”

The group also has a person at a radio transmitting race times.

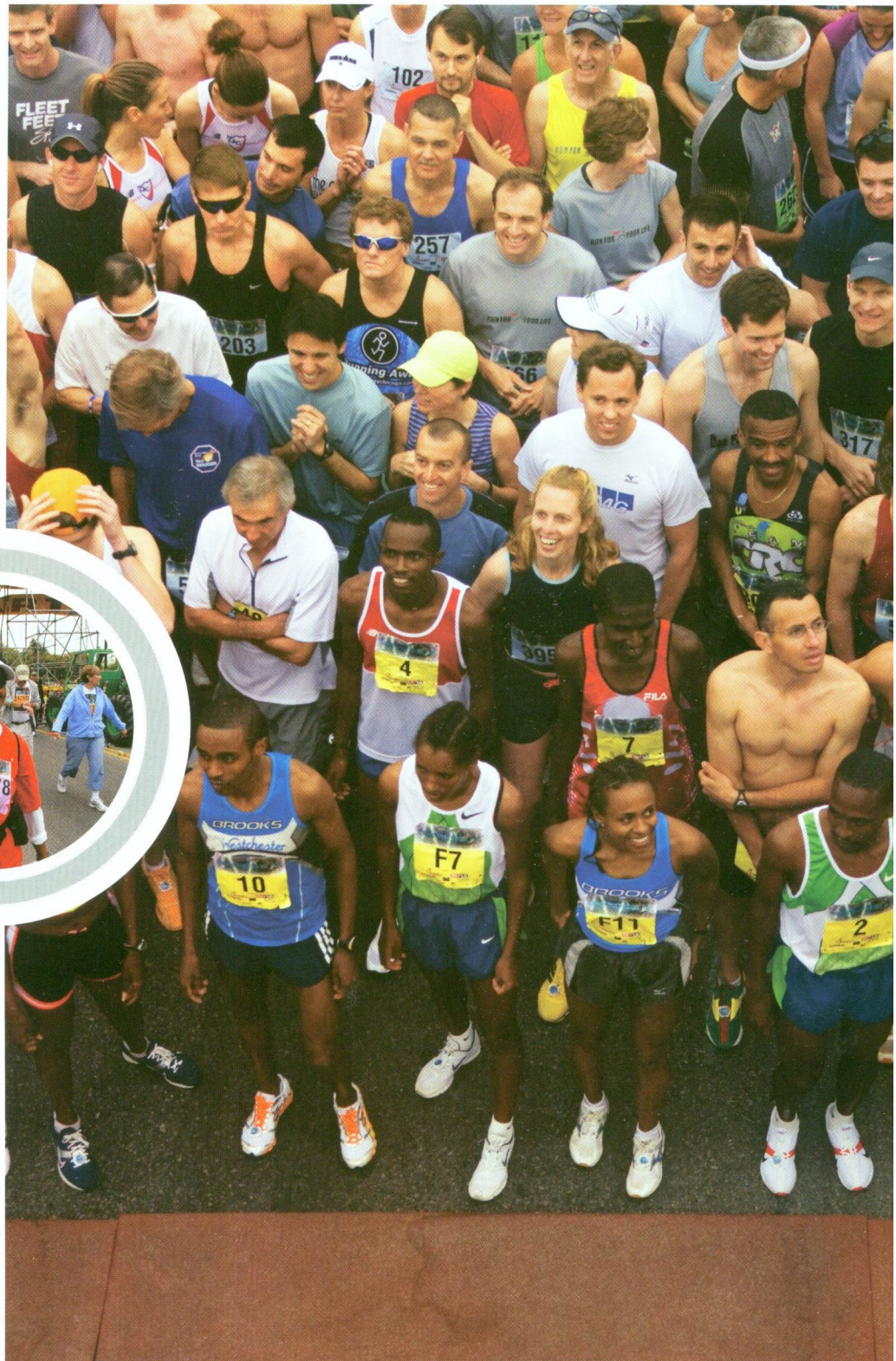
As runners pass speakers along the route, they hear computer-generated times to help them keep pace. The start time is also passed by radio to the finish line where, one minute into the race, a ham operator with the start time counts down the seconds to another operator at the finish line. The procedure ensures an accurate race time. Also, a radio transmitter in the lead vehicle sends a GPS positioning signal back to the grandstand and to anyone else who wants to monitor the position of the lead runner on the course. “That’s something we’ve added,” Bryce says. “It gives the position of the first and last

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runner, and you can track these people on a computer map.”

But the radio club’s participation isn’t limited to just communication. “We try to help wherever we can,” Bryce says. “If someone gets hurt, we assist and get the ambulance to them. We’re there to help, but the ham radio is why we’re there.”

Although they started out as participants in the radio club, Bryce and Jenny have each served as club president and realize the value of serving in public events like the Bridge Run. Activities such as this help the amateur radio club attract new members, and encourage current members to improve their skills. The practice helps them keep their skills sharp in case of an emergency. “Sometimes in hurricanes and other disasters, ham radios are the only means of communication,” Bryce says. “It’s good to be ready. And we enjoy the race.” ★



*photos by David Edwards*