

How BSCC Was Formed

As lived and told by Sam Atcherson

Sam had been active in the Central Maryland Microcomputer Users Group (CMMUG) in Columbia since about 1989. One of Sam's close friends in that club, John Van Horn, was one of two individuals that founded CMMUG several years earlier. Columbia is a far piece to travel, and Sam thought, "Gee, if John Van Horn can start a computer club in Columbia, why couldn't I start one in Bowie?"

One of the first things needed was a meeting place - preferably one where you might be able to store records and possibly a computer between meetings. The two Park and Planning Community Centers were approached about using their facilities, as were a few churches and the Bowie Library. Knowing some groups met at City Hall, the city was also approached as to the availability of meeting space in the evenings. Space was at a real premium and none was available.

Sam mentioned this to Sherman Krasney who suggested he inquire about space for a club as a Senior Center function. The Senior Center at that time occupied a couple of rooms in city hall. Senior's activity expanded into all the available space within the building. The then director of the Senior Center indicated she thought it would be worth trying, though her boss, the former Director of Community Service was less than enthusiastic. Fortunately he was soon replaced.

To gain initial interest in the club, Sam talked to participants of the exercise classes being held at the community centers, and to participants at the Senior Center. The facilities for seniors at city hall were very limited and participants at the center consisted largely of older seniors that were participating in the center on a "caretaker" basis. None of those approached seemed interested in computing.

The first meeting brought out 15 prospective members, fourteen women, and a single man. It was interesting to find that not a single person attending owned or even had access to a computer or knew why they might like to own one. It didn't take long before participants decided a computer club would not be of interest to them, and they stopped attending. That is all except Don Swan. Sam eventually gave Don a computer, and he never missed a meeting.

Perhaps a year after Sam's initial attempts to form a computer club, the membership now included several individuals quite interested in computing, and Sam wondered, "Why do this all by yourself?" The group met in Sam's kitchen to discuss formalizing the club with officers and bylaws. Everyone participating in the meeting volunteered for an office. It took a period of time and eventually on May 15, 1997 the club signed off on the bylaws.

The initial Bowie Seniors Computer Club officers were:

Sam Atcherson	President
Ralph Kessler	Vice President
Donald Swan	Secretary
Fred Gordon	Membership and Publicity
Ron Hooper	Librarian

Over the years a large number of individuals contributed in many different ways to support the computer club activities, as have the many speakers the club has been fortunate in having. Records are not available to identify each individual and their contributions.

The club presidents were:

Sam Atcherson	1997 - 1998
Charles Castillo	1998 - 2000
George Morris	2000 - 2002
Norman Bohrer	2002 - 2004
Clement Nettles	2004 - 2005
Jim Golden	2005 – 2006
Dale Grant	2007 - 2008
Carl Bulger	2009 - 2019
Dave Hackenberg	2019 - present

About that time, Sam started working on organizing the computer club, Stan Diamond was trying to get support for building a new Senior Center. Knowing it wouldn't happen with Stan working by himself, Sam asked Don Swan to work with Stan. Don had been a legislative assistant to state level politicians, and Sam knew his support would be most helpful.

Eventually, Stan and Don decided they needed more support. Each selected four individuals to form a senior center action committee. The committee met and Stan put two subjects up for vote. One resolution was to have a Senior's political rally and to inform the candidates for election that if they failed to vote funding for a senior center that the city's seniors would vote them out of office. Sam does not remember the other proposal, however, both proposals were voted down and that committee never met again.

The following day, Stan called Sam to say that since he was out of synch with the rest of the committee, he would no longer work toward getting a new center. Don Swan also called to tell Sam that he would be unwilling to continue to work toward getting a senior center without support and indicated that Sam was the one who started him in that direction in the first place and what was Sam going to do about it? Sam agreed to become the co-chairman of the committee to get a Senior Center. That effort, primarily by Don Swan, Dale Grant and Sam are another story, but eventually, the present Senior Center was built and provides a top-notch facility for our computer club and all of the other wonderful activities now available for seniors in the Bowie area.