



**Publication of the
Northern California
Contest Club**



Issue 493

June 2013

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Guests are always welcome at the NCCC!
Please join us.

Monday, June 10, 2013

Time:

6:00pm schmooz, 6:30pm dinner, 7:00pm program

Location:

Sneha Restaurant, 1214 Apollo Way, Suite 404 B,
Sunnyvale, CA 94085 Phone:(408) 481-0700

Program:

- Greeting
- BOD report
- Call for new business
- Treasurer's Report & Budget Approval Vote
- VP/CC report/WPX post-mortem
- Dayton 2013 Report--The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" by K6MM
- Field Day, and if time permits K6SRZ video of FD 2009

To register:

Please RSVP to Tom NS6T here:
nccc.treasurer@gmail.com

From the President...



WPX CW is behind us and everybody's favorite non-contest, ARRL Field Day, is next on most ham radio agendas. I'm the CW Captain for REDXA's Field Day effort on the grounds of the Marin Rod and Gun Club. This will be the first Field Day in many years where I haven't been sitting at a radio at the starting gun. I'll help with the setup, but on Saturday—during the daylight hours—I'll be at a ball game. One of my friends from high school did very well on football bets last season and as part of his share-the-wealth program he is taking me and several other old friends from the Tamalpais High School Class of 1961 via limousine to a luxury box at ATT Park to watch the giants play the Marlins.

We had the first NCCC BOD meeting of my term last week via Web X. It went very well and we agreed on the following:

- That NCCC will contribute \$250 to the Foothill-De Anza Federation in the memory of Smitty, W6CS, who was a huge boster of the community colleges, and, probably more than other individual, was responsible for establishing Foothill College as we know it today.
- That we not return this year to Michael's for a holiday party. Instead, there will be a regular December NCCC meeting and we will start planning for a festive summer meeting (starting in 2014) that will include XYLs, SOs, children, and grandchildren.

continued on page 3





Northern California Contest Club

Excellence In Amateur Radio Contesting

Officers:

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JUG Editor	Ian Parker	W6TCP	w6tcpian@gmail.com

Thursday Night Contesting:

NCCC—Sprint	Ken Keeler	N6RO	kenkeeler@jazznut.com
NS Ladder	Bill Haddon	N6ZFO	haddon.bill@gmail.com
Slow NS (SNS)	Chris Tate	N6WM	ctate@ewnetinc.com

NCCC Net

Thursday 8 PM
 Freq: 3.610 +/-

NCCC

Monthly meetings
 take place on the
 second Monday of
 each month !

Details in May JUG

NCCC Membership Information

If you wish to join NCCC, you must fill out an [application for membership](#), which will be read and voted upon at the next monthly meeting. ([PDF application form](#))

To join, you must reside within [club territory](#) which is defined as the maximum of:

- Northern California, anything north of the Tehachapi's up to the Oregon border, and
- A part of north-western Nevada (anything within our ARRL 175-mile radius circle centered at 10 miles North of Auburn on Highway 49).

- That we repeat the very successful three-way meeting of NCCC, MLDXCC, and REDXA this August at the same spot: the Rockville Grill in Fairfield. We are confirmed for Saturday, August 10 from noon to three. This meeting will replace the regular second Monday NCCC meeting for August.
- To approve the Treasurer's Report and submit it to the membership at our June meeting as specified in the NCCC bylaws.

Until we have a regular team responsible for running WebX at our meetings, I'll make an appearance at the June meeting. The prospect of good Indian food is a big motivator.

If all goes well, the July Meeting (at the Tied House, July 8) will feature a first-hand report from one of the world's rarest DX entities. Don't miss it.

We have yet to set the programs for September through December, but there are some fascinating possibilities. As always, I welcome your suggestions. I also urge you sit down at your keyboards and create content for **The Jug**. The online version allows us to include full color illustrations with our articles.

The ARRL VHF contest falls on the weekend of June 8-9. With my newly acquired 50 MHz capabilities I plan to get on and hand out a few Qs. Is there anyone among the NCCC membership who might at some time present "Six Meters for Beginners"? Many newer radios include six meters.

It is my sad duty to report the passing of Bill Snider, K6KM. Bill suffered a brief illness and died on May 30. Bill was a ham for 64 years and travelled to and operated from many foreign locations. With wife Ginny (N6RER), he established the world class Yankee Hill contest station [NG6O and K6WW—look them up to see some funny acronyms] where several NCCC members have posted winning scores in a variety of HF contesting events.

Rest in peace Bill and thank you for your friendship and for what you did for the hobby we love.

73 & KB,

Alan/K6SRZ

Busy Day(s) in KH6

Shortly after arriving on Maui for a family vacation, we got the word that old friend Rob Van Geen NH6V (formerly WB6SHD, well known within NCCC) had suffered a terrible accident on the big island of Hawaii where he has lived for the past 14 years. Here is the story as I believe I heard it. Any inaccuracies are mine.

An avid triathlete, Rob and two friends were just setting out on a 300+ mile bicycle ride around the Big Island, part of their training for an upcoming triathlon. Rob described it as the peak of their training program. As he rode in the lead through the head of a T intersection, a nurse driving a Jeep turned left onto his road and then, "on autopilot" from years of making this precise approach to her work, turned right in front of Rob. At about 20 MPH, he was unable to stop in the mere inches available. He slammed into the Jeep, hitting the right outside mirror and the A-pillar. He flipped over the hood, onto the road ... and then the bad stuff began. His head hit the pavement and a Jeep wheel rolled over it, shattering his helmet into 50 pieces ... 50 life saving pieces as it turned out. Next to be run over was his chest, breaking six or seven ribs. He was unconscious for the middle 15 seconds of the event and got some of the details from his buddies who experienced the horror of viewing a near fatal accident, the joy of realizing it was, at least so far, just "near," and then the anxiety of waiting for the ambulance while the nurse (yes, the responsible motorist herself) rendered first response. Rob had survived but was badly injured, beyond the skill set of local providers, so they air-lifted him to Honolulu on the island of Oahu.

Queens Hospital operates the state's (indeed, the entire Pacific rim's) primary trauma center. It's also the most beautiful hospital I've ever seen, complete with inlaid, hardwood floors, extensive artwork on the walls and curlicue wards that would baffle a maze-running rat. Rob needed every ounce of their ample skills. His skull was cracked, his jaw broken, his left eye socket busted, and more. I spoke to him on the phone two days after the accident and was relieved to hear his voice clear and his speech lucid. He was already thanking his lucky stars for having survived. Great attitude! After stabilizing for a couple more days, he underwent nine hours of surgery. They filled his head with plates and screws using techniques I'd rather not reiterate and, by the time I saw him a week later, he was bloodied but once again unbowed; that is, his facial parts were realigned. The docs had done a great job of putting him back together. Rob is also an athlete of some accomplishment, in superb physical condition prior to his vault over and under the Jeep, and that certainly helped him both before and after surgery.

While the post-accident drama was unfolding, Lloyd Cabral KH6LC (formerly AA6T, also of NCCC) stayed in close touch with Rob. They both live on the Big Island and Rob often operates at Lloyd's station. I had known Rob since we both lived in Sunnyvale, where he was a high school student in the late '70s and I was a 30-ish engineer. He lived around the corner then and I remember insisting that he get his mother's permission before climbing my tower, which he did eagerly. Lloyd was planning to visit Rob in the hospital and I offered to come along from Maui. We tracked his progress and it looked like Thursday, May 9 would be the best date for Rob and for us. Hopefully, he would be sufficiently recovered from his surgery to accept visitors. In the event, he was not only accepting visitors but ready to be released (in his own opinion, anyway)! His mother lives now on Oahu, in a senior community only a few miles from the hospital, so she would provide housing and attention for the six weeks or so that Rob would need to stay close to his doctors.

Inter-island air transport is extensive and Lloyd and I were able to arrange neatly coordinated flights (in theory) among the Big Island, Maui and Oahu. Lloyd and Fred KH7Y (formerly W6YKM and W6YM) arrived a few minutes before my (scheduled) arrival time, rented a car and waited patiently for my Go! Airlines' flight to arrive, more than a little bit late. We drove downtown and found Rob chomping at the bit and his jaw sutures, eager to get out of Dodge. Of course, nothing happens quickly in a hospital, so we made arrangements to come back at 2:00 after his release papers were complete and his Bag o' Meds prepared. Lloyd left him with a change of clothes he had bought and the rest of us headed North for a loosely arranged visit to superstation KH7X, the Oahu Contest Club, and its current owner Alex KH6YY and station mainstay Mike KH6ND.

KH7X is a pretty awesome multi-multi in Haleiwa, with six towers arranged in an E-W line down a long, narrow lot on a hillside in the North Shore region of Oahu. They are very tall, very solid and very close. The E-W alignment may mitigate their proximity by letting the elements align linearly when multiple beams point more or less North from adjacent towers. Indoors, a very cushy "operating theater" (medical reference - get it?) has a position for each band plus a Mission Control desk. Most of the rigs are 1000MPs and there are a variety of amps, mainly Alphas. One position is cabled to be switched into single-op duty. It is all very clean, neat and spacious. Next door, on a recently acquired second lot, is an air conditioned bunk room for guest ops. It's a cushy layout!

After a station tour and a great, seaside lunch with Alex and Mike, we set out for Honolulu to spring Rob from his involuntary servitude. Traffic looked a lot like the Bay Area at rush hour and our late start from Haleiwa didn't help. When we got to Queens, Rob was ready to sprint for the door, but they don't do that at hospitals. They called for the mandatory wheelchair. We gathered up Rob's possessions (including a nice, fresh cycling helmet and shades, courtesy of his riding buds!) and waited. And waited. Then we waited some more. Finally, the newly on-duty charge nurse gave up waiting and offered to handle the wheelchairs herself. She got one quickly. We rolled Rob to the elevator, to the Finance office (which was just placing the Closed sign in our way), across the hall to Admissions which serves as off-hours Discharge, and finally to near freedom at the curb. Lloyd fetched the rental car and we were off to take Rob home, or at least to his mother's home. But wait! He couldn't see much at all now that his eyes had been rearranged, so we went to a nearby mall where an extraordinarily patient Lenscrafters lady helped him choose a frame and negotiate the Byzantine corridors of optical prescription rules and regulations. One doc had insisted that Rob get his old prescription without prismatic correction but he wasn't authorized to write that down in English (or Latin or optician's numerology, either). The authorized doc was at a different Lenscrafters office. Our local lady finally got it all arranged but the glasses wouldn't be ready for an hour. We didn't have an hour. Bumping up against our time limit to catch our return flights, and with Rob running out of energy and previously installed pain meds, we suggested that they deliver the glasses to Rob's mom's place, practically across the street, albeit a large, complex intersection. Miss Lenscrafters said she would try to make that happen at 6:00 when the glasses would be ready or in any case she would deliver them personally when she got off work at 9:00! In fact, that latter plan is what happened. My next missive will be a letter of praise to her supervisor.

While I was helping Rob negotiate eyeglasses, Lloyd and Fred found a drugstore where they scored three cases of Rob's favorite liquid diet. Normally a training supplement for him, now it's all he can get into his wired-shut mouth (through which he speaks quite well, considering). We finally delivered him, his flowers, balloons, shopping bag full of meds, cases of Ensure, new helmet and other essentials of post-surgical life to the very gracious apartment complex and into the arms of his elderly and quite relieved mom. It had been a busy and eventful day. Rob was very grateful and we were happy to have been of assistance. It was great to see Rob again after many years, although we agreed that the next time would not be due to a near-fatal bike accident.

Our duties done, Lloyd, Fred and I once again braved the Honolulu rush-hour traffic and managed to avoid its worst spots. We actually made it back to the airport in time for a beer and our flights, which were to depart from adjacent gates. Although my flight to Maui was supposed to depart ten minutes later than theirs to Hawaii, the airline (Hawaiian Airlines for all of us this time) appeared to have switched the times. We did some final rag-chewing (and hangar flying with Fred, a fellow aviator), said good-bye and off we flew to our respective islands. I had 17 hours back on Maui at QTH 2 in Kihei, including a final dip in the blue Pacific, before catching the flight back to San Jose with my family.

There was other radio activity on this vacation, some of which I already reported online such as 75 Qs with my KX3 and a random wire from QTH 1 in Ka'anapali in between knob-twiddling rituals with my 2.5 year old grandson. I also managed to survive Maui's infamous Hana Highway to visit Al Couper NH7O. Al is a unique individual, living off the grid and almost off the land on "Kalepa Farm" between Hana and Kaupo. Al explains how he set sail from San Francisco 30 years ago seeking his place on the planet. His first stop was

Hawaii, then Maui to visit friends who owned this piece of then-almost-undeveloped land. He stayed a while, met his life partner, sold the boat, and never really left. He became caretaker of the property where he still lives. He has installed a windmill, hydro-electric generator and photovoltaic panels to provide for his electricity needs. He grows bananas, coconuts, other fruits and some vegetables and raises celibate chickens for their abundant eggs. He has a couple of radio towers supporting a variety of antennas and is most proud of his phased wire arrays for 80 and 160 where he is a regular. He runs a K3 to a homebrew, solid state amp. I really enjoyed the visit as well as the long, "interesting" drive, essentially encircling the base of Mount Haleakala. A lot of it is 10 or 15 MPH dirt, graded gravel and rutted asphalt switchbacks, with dozens of one-lane bridges. It is unlikely ever to achieve fully-paved status due to a fierce resistance to change among the local residents. Good for them! I made the compulsory stop at the Kaupo Store which has been in operation since the 1920s and sports quite a collection of antique cameras and bottles assembled by the original owner. It's a great drive unless you are prone to car sickness. In that case, fuggedaboudit!

Despite the several radio interludes, it was a great vacation with the family. They forgave me the time in pursuit of my hobby and agreed that the hospital call to our former neighbor was more than appropriate. (Even though my son Jeremy KC6YEW, father of the 2.5 year old, was himself a toddler when we lived around the corner from Rob!) Our KH6 friends are gracious hosts, always eager to meet their mainland brethren. We'll be back!

73,

Rick N6XI

The AB577

Sometime before the 100th Anniversary of the U.S. Army Signal Corps in June 1960 the Corps commissioned a new piece of equipment: a 50 foot field deployable antenna tower designated AB577. We know this because the June 21, 1960 official program of 100th anniversary festivities at Ft. Monmouth [Signal Corps Hq. until 1965 when headquarters shifted to Ft. Gordon, Georgia] lists the AB 577 as one of the exhibits on view from the Engineering design division.



The AB 577 went on to support US troops in Vietnam and in the Desert Storm campaign before finally being rendered obsolete and surplus. Most AB577s are painted Army olive drab, though my own AB577 sports Desert Storm desert camouflage. It is as a surplus item that the AB577 has enjoyed widespread adoption by radio amateurs.

Often dubbed the “rocket launcher” tower, the AB577 consists of interlocking sections of five-foot aluminum tubes that are inserted at the base of the tower, connected to the tube above, and then raised into place by a hand-cranked winch. The tower is held in place by three sets of stainless steel guy wires. On a windless day a single person can erect an AB577, though this is dangerous. It’s much better to have a crew of four or five. The AB577 is an almost perfect solution for a field day tower. My own local radio club, REDXA, has a set of three AB577s that on Field Day support a pair of tribanders and a 2-element 40 M yagi.

Who designed the AB577 and when the first prototype was constructed so far remain mysteries. The Signal Corps librarian at Ft. Gordon was kind enough to supply the Signal Corps anniversary program, but could find no references to the tower at any earlier date. The agency responsible for the design of the AB577 was the US Army Communication and Electronic Command (USACECOM). The Army’s purpose for the tower was to support the 1425 microwave dish antenna. [*Extension kit: MK 806/GRC Antenna Support AB 857/ GRC AT 903/G horn type microwave antennas (a pair)*] for F-band (90 – 140 GHz) and J-band (10-20 GHz) communication.



To acquire an AB577 today, a ham needs either to find a used unit at a hamfest or swap meet or purchase one from Ontario Surplus (that’s Ontario New York). Ben Brown, owner of Ontario Surplus told me that he has seen drawings for components of the AB577 with the stamps of both the U.S. Army Signal Material Support Agency and the Brooks and Perkins Company of Detroit dated October 1961. Brooks and Perkins may have been the first company to produce the AB 577 in quantity, but other manufacturers also produced the unit.



The most recent supplier of AB 577s was the J&H Smith Company of Lamar SC, which won a competitive bid to produce the AB 577 and manufactured approximately 2,200 units until the late 1980s. J&H Smith also manufactured 800 AB 621 towers, a taller “big brother” version of the AB 577 and an extension kit for the AB 577 that allowed it to reach a height of 73 feet. I have one of these extension kits, but not the courage to try it out. The AB577 sold to the Army for about \$2,200.

According to Bill Smith, one of the original partners in J&H Smith, the AB 577 was designated for replacement and the Signal Corps sought requests for a proposal to develop a prototype QEAM—quick erect antenna mast—which could be erected by two men in less than 15 minutes. Smith and his two brothers developed a carbon fiber mast that was accepted by the Army but never went into mass production and eventually their design was dropped. The

prototype now resides in Bill Smith’s garage. The QEAM project appears to have survived however. A Web search of “QEAM” reveals QEAMs of various sizes, from 15 feet to well over 100 feet are still being produced.

The AB577 is much more than a Field Day tower. The structure is strong enough to easily support a full-sized triband yagi and, using the supplied lever arm, can be “arm strong” rotated a full 360 degrees. Many AB577s are being used in semi-permanent installations, avoiding the need to pour a massive concrete base for the tower. And because the tower is classified as a temporary structure, the AB 577 has allowed some hams to avoid needing the building permits required for permanent, in-ground installations.

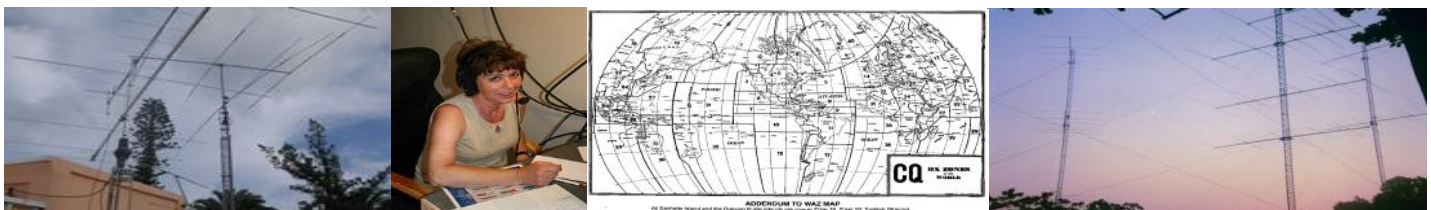
Alan/K6SRZ



Please consider writing an article for JUG !

July 2013 Newsletter Deadline—July 3rd

This is your newsletter so lets make it something we are proud of. I hope you will consider writing an article for the JUG! Whether its about your station, recent contest experience or a technical article we would appreciate hearing from you. Send your articles to Ian W6TCP w6tcp@comcast.net



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