

The CONTEST JUG

Newsletter of the

Northern California Contest Club

44 Toyon Terrace

Danville, CA 94526

(415) 837-6894

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President: AI6V	(916) 265-2211
VP/CC: KI6EZ	(415) 334-2233
Sec/Treas: N6EK	(415) 527-7655
JUG Ed.: AK6T	(415) 837-3478

Awards: K6ZM	(415) 837-6894
Directors: AD6E	(408) 526-1549
WZ6Z	(415) 562-1716
N6KT	(408) 374-6123
WB6MZQ	(415) 254-3350

NCCC REPEATER: 147.240 (+600)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

(Contest dates are UTC.)

- Mar 09-11 Japan International DX Contest, CW.
- Mar 16 NCCC annual awards banquet.
- Mar 17-18 Bermuda Contest, CW/phone.
- Mar 24-25 CQ WPX Contest, phone.
- Apr 20 NCCC meeting, Miguel's. Hayward.
- Apr 29 Helvetia Contest, CW/phone.

February minutes

Our February 22 meeting was held at the home of Brook Byers, K4TKM, in San Francisco. Brook and his wife Shawn lavished hospitality on the thirty NCCC members, wives and friends attending. Following an attitude adjustment period, a sumptuous buffet featuring shish kebab with choice wines was enjoyed by all. The pool table, various game machines and ragchewing kept us busy during the after-dinner coffee break. At this time, the Byers' delightful sons Chad, 3, and Blake, 5, joined the group. Blake, who sees himself as Davy Crockett and likes to go

by that name, wore the proper King of the Wild Frontier outfit.

A hearty vote of thanks to Brook, Shawn, Chad and "Davy" from NCCC!

President Carl Cook, AI6V, opened a brief business meeting at 9:30. Minutes of the January meeting were approved. Dick Dievendorff, AA6MC, was unanimously welcomed into NCCC membership. (See "New member" item.)

Our guest speaker, Chod Harris, VP2ML, then entertained us with a fascinating glimpse of the hard work and deadline pressures of producing *The DX Bulletin*. (See next item.) Many thanks, Chod.

The meeting was adjourned at 11 p.m.

—AK6T

How *The DX Bulletin* is produced

According to Chod, our guest speaker at the Feb. meeting, his four-page weekly newsletter is mailed to no fewer than 10,000 readers once a week throughout the year,

except for a week off around Christmas and another week for family vacation later.

Chod took on the bulletin task four years ago. Circulation has climbed to seven times what it was. A 286-based computer with 150 mb of storage and Word Perfect 5.0 is used for word processing. Like many computer users, Chod is already growing impatient with the plodding 17 MHz processing speed. He plans to run 30 MHz on a 386, followed by upgrade to a 486 as soon as possible.

Camera-ready copy produced on an HP laser printer goes to a local printing firm first thing Monday. A 24-hour turnaround delivers the printed and folded pieces to a labeling crew on Tuesday morning. (The second-color title block is preprinted, 100K sheets at a time, so only a single print run in black ink is needed.) Folding, labeling and sorting are finished by late afternoon on Tuesday, and the new issue is rushed to the local post office by 4:59 p.m. A waiting USPS truck rushes the air mail portion to SFO. Chod was the first N. Calif. user of this International Postal Air Lift (IPAL) service for bulk first-class airmail. He continues to find the service so effective that subscribers in Tokyo get their copies of the bulletin next morning, before anyone else.

Research for the propagation section involves tapping into the WWV bulletin board three or four times a week, making Chod the most frequent user. Chod also refers to several other sources in writing and illustrating his column. He got a good laugh when he said the sun has been so ornery of late that some of his predictions have been embarrassingly wide of the mark.

Bandpass is the most difficult and costly section to produce, Chod stated. Much information comes in by landline

and increasingly by packet and FAX. He has to sort, interpret and categorize the inputs for weekly updating of the column. Each entry for the Regulars section requires mention by at least 10 operators to qualify. Chod reads about 450 pages of info. a week and puts 45-50 into the database. He also reads 30 DX newsletters, of which only 10 are in English. A few other highlights: The bulletin goes to nearly 80 DXCC countries . . . annual production takes 4 man years . . . most rumors of upcoming DX expeditions prove false . . . his "guard" pooch is called Dog X-ray.

Many thanks to Chod for an inside look at the remarkable effort that goes into producing what is billed as "America's Premium Weekly Amateur Radio Publication."

—AK6T

March meeting to be Annual Awards Banquet

Our March 16 meeting will be the Annual Awards Banquet to take place at the Pleasanton Hotel. The cash bar opens at 7:00 p.m. Dinner follows at 8:00. You have a choice of New York steak for \$25 or grilled chicken breast with champagne mushrooms for \$20. Included in the price is tossed green salad and a chocolate lavin with raspberry purée; also, tax and tip.

Advanced reservations required. Mail your check to Al Maenchen, AD6E, 3330 Farthing Way, San Jose, CA 95132. Your check needs to be in Al's hands by March 11, although it is possible that a late call to him at (408) 926-1549 might do the trick.

Our speaker may or not be Martti Laine, OH2BH, telling us about his highly successful dxpedition to Guatemala, where he operated as TG0AA in the ARRL International CW Contest early this Feb.

Martti is waiting to know whether he will be DXing as YV0DX from Aves I. that weekend. If Martti cannot be with us, our speaker will be Scotty Martin, W7SW, regaling us with details of his KC4USV, VK9XT and VK9YT operations.

— N6EK and AK6T

Mark your calendar

Our April 20 meeting is scheduled for Miguel's, Hayward. Cocktail time starts around 6 p.m., with dinner at 7. This will be the annual election meeting, but election proceedings should take only a few minutes.

The program will probably be a nitty-gritty evaluation of contest software.

New editorial team takes over

As you read last month, production of The Jug is now in the hands of Phil, K6ZM, Bob, N6EK, and Pat, AK6T. All three gather and write info. Pat edits and composes on a Macintosh with Microsoft Word and, if necessary, Page Maker. Our aim is to get the newsletter in the mail by the end of the previous month. Let's hope this isn't mere wishful thinking on our part.

Our previous Jug editor, Alex, KI6EZ, has been doing a super job despite severe time constraints. He richly deserves a break. Thank you very much, Alex, for your dedication to the club.

N6 Totally Insane Bill learns fast

Bill, N6TIB, and I met at a local club field day in 1988. He had very limited experience of amateur radio, but his obvious love of contesting drove him to win several club awards.

I encouraged him to enter the Cal QSO Party. It would be his first serious

contest effort. Louese, KA6ING, had just offered an award to the top novice/tech in or out of California. Bill won it with lots of CW QSOs.

Bill and I teamed up to enter CQWW, ARRL and WPX in both modes. Having youth on his side, he was able to contribute 60% air time to my 40%. In ARRL we placed first W6, both modes. For WPX phone we went to Fort Bidwell.

Bill's goal was to make the NCCC 5 Meg Award in one year. He achieved it easily and was named NCCC Rookie of the Year. Of those with the 5 Meg Award, Bill is the only one with no previous contest experience, and he made it in just one contest season. During that season, he passed his general. Bill progressed rapidly, going from 10 wpm at the start to running JAs at 30 wpm in a few months. Well done, Bill.

—W6REC

New member elected

Welcome to our latest member, Dick Dievendorff, AA6MC, elected at the February meeting. First licenced in 1960, Dick upgraded to extra in January 1989. He is 43 years old and a senior programmer with IBM in Winchester, England. Although new to contesting, he is already an avid contester with the call G0MFO and was active as recently as the ARRL International CW weekend. Glad to have you with us, Dick!

—AK6T

TG0AA results

Martti Laine reports that he had 6300 Qs in the ARRL DX CW Contest as TG0AA. He said the previous record was 5300. Martti is not sure whether his was the top number of Qs this time. When I talked to him, he had not heard how

competitors N6TJ at ZD8D, or HC2G and HK0/N3TJ had done. Martti commented that he had never worked the ARRL DX Contest before and was interested to discover that one could run out of US stations to work if one had a long-enough opening.

—N6EK

September CW Sprint results

When the dust settled after the Sep. 1989 Sprint, our own Bob Wilson, N6TV, was the high scorer for Calif., setting a new all-time record for the state. He had 301 Qs for a final score of 14,749, won in a hard-fought battle with K6NA, who was only 2 Qs short of matching Bob's score. In all, 4 Californians beat the previous all-time record of 13,301 set by K6NA in Sep. 1988; N6ND (K6STI, op) and N6AA came in third and fourth.

Our prime team, NCCC #1, made a strong improvement to number three at 103,870 points, up from number five and 88,861 points in the previous Sprint. (Ironically, N6TV was on NCCC #2 because he had no standing in the club, since he hadn't operated in Sprint for so long!) Congrats to N1EE/6.

—N6EK

More on the K8CC logging program

The story in last month's jug about the K8CC logging program got garbled somehow between being written and being printed. The point that got lost was the K1EA program is wonderful but covers only four contests at this time: CQWW, ARRL DX from the USA, WPX and WAE. Dave Pruett, K8CC, has filled the gap with a program that looks the same to the user, so you don't have to relearn. It covers

many of the missing contests: NA Sprint, NA QSO Party, IARU HF, ARRL Sweepstakes, ARRL 160 m, CQ 160 m and ARRL 10 m.

Dave has asked us to distribute his program free. For a copy, send an empty, formatted floppy to Phil, K6ZM, or Alex, KI6EZ. This is the second logging program you should get. If you still don't have the K1EA program, check with Phil or Alex.

I feel that the main contests still missing are the All Asia, as well the ARRL International from the DX end. No doubt, AA is a less-interesting contest for K1EA and K8CC than for us West Coasters. I would also like a K1EA-type program for non-contest use by dxpeditions. Perhaps there is already some way to do this with the existing programs and I have simply not figured what it is.

—N6EK

Radio Amateur Home for Sale in Danville

We are about to place our beautiful home in the desirable Greenbrook area of Danville on the market and move to a smaller one about a mile away. This is a rare buy for a radio amateur wishing to avoid the now-standard CC&Rs prohibiting outdoor antennas.

- 2,435 sq ft in prime condition
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- Quiet street in well-maintained neighborhood

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Paid Advertisement

NCCC badges available again

A new supplier for our badges has offered his services, and the backlog has been cleared. Badges are now ready for AD6E, KI3V, N6TIB and W0ZZ. Badges not

picked up at the Awards Banquet will be mailed.

Newly ordered badges now cost \$7.50. If you want one, send me a check.

—N6EK

VALLEYVIEWPOINT

How to minimize radio headaches

By Patrick Whittle

A news story that appeared in the Nov. 5 Times about people in Dublin who say they have telephone interference from John Markey's amateur-radio operation points up a serious and growing problem.

Millions of electronic gadgets are flooding the marketplace, and nearly all of them are susceptible to RFI, or radio frequency interference.

The inability to reject unwanted signals is nothing less than a design defect. Manufacturers are aware of the problem, and they know they could eliminate most RFI by adding simple filters in their circuits.

Such filters consist of two or three miniature parts — capacitors, wire coils or ferrite beads — costing a few cents. Yet manufacturers are dragging their feet because the Federal Communications Commission merely recommends, but does not insist on, filtering.

This policy is understandable in today's atmosphere of deregulation, but industry's failure to respond is leading to chaos on the airwaves and rank injustice to the radio amateur.

The FCC treats amateur radio transmitting sets quite differently. Manufacturers are required to shield and filter them so thoroughly that only energy on the desired operating frequency is emitted. That is why Tom Hora of the FCC's Livermore office was quoted as saying that the cause of the Dublin problems might not lie in the ham operator's equipment but rather in that of his neighbors.

Many radio amateurs have enough skill to retrofit telephones and stereo sets with filters, but modifying their neighbor's electronic gadgets can easily backfire. Anything that goes wrong with the equipment thereafter will be blamed on the ham.

Plug-in radio filters, available from American Telephone & Telegraph stores at a cost of \$17.95 plus tax, are often effective in clearing up telephone interference. Ferrite beads slipped over speaker leads can eliminate RFI problems on stereo sets. Other simple filters on power cords and coaxial cables usually

work well with TV problems. As the old saying goes, where there's a will, there's a way.

None of these Band-Aid measures would be needed if the FCC required proper filters to be installed at the manufacturing stage.

Another problem mentioned in the Times story was how the radio amateur's antenna affects the appearance of the neighborhood. Beauty or ugliness is in the mind of the beholder. Ramshackle fences, weedy front lawns, peeling paintwork, oily driveways and festoons of overhead power lines could be regarded as more serious blights, all of them unnecessary.

For a radio amateur who wishes to contact distant places, a good antenna is necessary. Restrictive covenants in planned unit developments oblige many a ham to make do with wires in the attic, but a rotatable beam antenna at a height of 40 to 70 feet puts the world at his or her fingertips.

A further benefit of antennas on towers is that the energy reaching houses below them decreases geometrically with height. Thus, the possibility of RFI and health hazards is minimized.

If the Dublin City Council wants to restrict antennas, it would be well-advised to consult the FCC as soon as possible. The FCC issued a memorandum opinion and order, known as PRB-1, in 1985 that directed cities to reach a reasonable accommodation between the legitimate needs of the local government and those of the radio amateur.

The order made it clear that prohibiting outdoor ham antennas was out of the question. With regard to RFI, the order pre-empts local regulations. In other words, radio interference problems fall entirely within the province of the FCC.

Amateur radio is not only a fascinating hobby strictly regulated by international agreement, it is an invaluable disaster communications resource.

As recently as the morning after last month's big earthquake, Bay Area hams were handling hundreds of health and welfare messages from around the nation and the world when the telephone system was useless.

That's why I was happy to read that the Dublin amateur and his neighbors were sitting down to solve the RFI problems and let him enjoy his radio.

Patrick Whittle is a Danville resident.

San Ramon Valley Times, Nov. 22, 1989

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