



Publication of the
Northern California
Contest Club



May
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Issue 432

NCCC Net
Thursday 8 PM
3610+/-

Our Next Meeting

Contest Software Loggers, K9YC & panel
CQPWin, AE6Y, CT-Win, N6BV
N1MM Logger, K6MM, WriteLog, W2SC
Win-Test, N6TV

Date: Monday, 12 May 2008

Time: 6:00pm schmooze, 7:00 dinner, 8:00pm program

Location: Holder's Country Inn, 998 S. De Anza
Boulevard, San Jose, CA 95129 Dinners – You choose
and pay

Dinner choices include Fresh Salmon, Chicken Cordon Bleu,
Sirloin Tips & Noodles or Vegetarian Lasagna. All dinners
include fresh vegetables, rice, salad with Italian dressing and
coffee, tea or soda. Price including tax and tip is \$25.00.
Payment can be via the club's PayPal account or at the door.

RSVP to [K6EU](#)

This is just south of the intersection of Highways 280 and 85
in Cupertino.

NCCC Officers

President: [John Miller, K6MM](#)

Vice-President and Contest Chairman: [Jim Brown K9YC](#)

Secretary/Treasurer: [Tom Carney, K6EU](#)

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Past President: [Bob Tellefsen, N6WG](#)

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Director: [Tom Berson, ND2T](#)

Honorary Director: Rusty Epps, W6OAT

Webmaster: Ed Muns, W0YK w0yk@msn.com

JUG Editor: Rob Brownstein, k6rb@baymoon.com

Presidential Musings

I am honored to be leading this world-class team of colleagues, who collectively represent the very best in the sport of Amateur Radio Contesting.

Although the program for this year is still being finalized, you can be sure that our monthly meetings will solidly support our stated goals:

- To promote the fun, satisfaction and competitive thrill of radio contesting
- To help our members develop their operating and technical skills to become better contesters, and
- To win the club competition of major amateur radio contests

I invite you to join me in congratulating the new NCCC Leadership Team. Send them a big DAH-DIT-DAH; DAH-DIT-DIT-DIT!

73,
John, K6MM

VP/CC

As your new Vice President and Contest Chairman, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your vote of confidence, and to outline my proposed contest plan for the year.

First, let's state our objective:

To have fun contesting, to get better at it, and to help others do the same.

At the recent awards dinner, I received a plaque recognizing me as the "Most Improved Contester for 2007." I believe I won that award for three reasons:

First, more than a dozen KBers helped me improve my station – antennas, more antenna tuners, improved switching, and better logging software.

Second, other KBers shared their thoughts and experience with contesting.

Third, I've been working with other KBers to improve my operating skills.

Thanks to the K6VVA video, I'm gradually learning SO2R and getting my station set up for a full SO2R effort. All of this work has given me considerable pleasure and satisfaction.

Last year, a very successful recruiting drive brought us many new members. Some are experienced testers; some are not. Some have good stations; some do not.

For the 2008-09 contesting season, I propose that NCCC carry out a plan to help all of our members work toward their own growth and enjoyment, at whatever pace works for them. The plan has several parts.

First, we need to identify those members who could use our help – anything from antennas, radio interfacing, logging software, using the cluster, building operating skills, and/or finding a place to operate.

Last year's recruiting program is a great step in that direction. We need a team to collect and maintain the data of who needs help, what kind of help they need, where they live, and what sort of station they have.

Second, we need teams of volunteers to provide that help.

- The antenna committee, led by K6EU, has been in operation for nearly a year.
- We need a team to coordinate operator training and nurturing.
- We need a team to help with logging software, with members throughout our circle who can sit down at the computer and get things going, perhaps even during a contest.

Third, many of our members lack a QTH where they can readily build their own station, or have a very limited station. Others want to trade QTHs for Sweepstakes. We need a team to identify those members needing stations to operate, identify their skill levels, and link them with members willing to share their station.

Some members may need Elmering, and some of those sharing stations may be able to provide it. Some of those sharing stations may want to split operating time with a guest operator, making it a full

time multi-operator effort. Others may want to simply turn over the shack to the guest.

Some are naturally reluctant to share their QTH with a guest operator who is unknown to them, and whose technical skills are unknown. No one wants the cost or inconvenience of repairing a power amp or high-power antenna tuner that a guest op has blown up!

So, one important part of coordinating this sharing operation is verifying the backgrounds of the various players so that things work out well.

Every member should be active on Field Day, either learning to be a better operator, or helping another member do so. We need a volunteer to link up members with the many Field Day operations around our circle.

We propose to begin all of this work and coordination right away! There are at least 18 contests between now and the CW weekend of Sweepstakes – WPX CW, NAQP, RAC, NA Sprints, IOTA, IARU, All Asia DX, CQWW SSB, and, of course, CQP.

Half include SSB operation, nearly two-thirds include CW operation, and three are RTTY contests. Each one of them is an opportunity for operator training, for learning new logging software; and for checking out a new antenna, a new computer to radio interface, or station setup. Each is an opportunity for sharing a station with a guest operator. Each is an opportunity to have fun!

We also need volunteers to coordinate our activities in various contests throughout the year. Please contact me

or any board member if you'd like to jump into the fray.

73,
Jim Brown K9YC

February 2008 Aruba Trip Notes – Antenna/Tower Refit Expedition (PART ONE)

Andy Faber, AE6Y (and more)

This was unfortunately not a contest trip (except for Ed), but rather a work “party” to replace all three towers and all antennas. The key workers were John Fore, W6LD, Ed Muns, W0YK, Tom Schiller, N6BT, and me.

We got a lot of help from JP Lauwereys, P43A, while Andy Bodony, K2LE, P40LE, and Joop Bok, P43JB, also played important roles. We had been hoping for assistance from John Crovelli, W2GD, P40W, but he was hung up on a job in Texas and missed the trip (and the ARRL DX CW contest – as did I, who have operated it from there the past five years).

The three of us arrived on Wednesday afternoon, February 13, 2008, but Ed had been there for a week, having operated the CQ WPX RTTY contest the previous weekend (and apparently, again, turned in the world #1 score). Furthermore, he and JP, with Andy Bodony's help, had already made significant progress on the tower dismantling.

Here's Ed's story of that first week (including the contest):

Tuesday, 5 February. I drove to John's (W6LD) house at 8:30 p.m., dropping off the machined 6-inch by 6-inch aluminum plates, and various hardware from McMaster. I had two checked bags, one 45 lb and one 70 lb. Included was the new Lug-All come-along, 150 feet of ¼ inch SS wire rope, tower jack, leg aligner, and other miscellaneous tools and parts. John shuttled me up to the La Quinta Motel near SFO. The hotel has a shuttle service to SFO that runs every 30 minutes beginning at 5 a.m., but offered to provide me a taxi at their expense to pick me up at my room with all my checked and carry-on luggage. (I also had maxed out my carry-on with my three laptop computer systems.)

Wednesday, 6 February. The trip down was mostly normal, connecting through MIA. A near miss occurred when I was sitting near my gate for the Aruba flight, working on my computer when my cell phone rang. The man said he was with American Airlines and was about to close the door on my flight to Aruba! I quickly stowed my computer and ran over to the gate. Guess I need to set an alarm clock to make sure I board the plane.

Another lesson out of this is to include your cell phone number on your ticket reservation. The SFO-MIA flight was full, as always, and the MIA-AUA flight was sparsely occupied. I had an entire row to myself. I've learned to request an emergency row seat in Coach because there is more leg room and you are included in the Group I boarding sequence. I cleared customs, got my luggage and was at the taxi stand in record time. Unlike January, there were taxis queued up so I was at the cottage just 30 minutes after landing. Before retiring, I set up my SOM2 RTTY configuration but didn't do any testing or operating. Taking a flashlight out to the garage, I took a cursory view of the container shipment of tower sections, F-12 boxes and other various boxes. I exchanged a couple emails with Andy and John about my trip down and miscellaneous comments after arrival.

Thursday, 7 February. Before making a run to Ling & Sons for groceries, I checked the material in the garage more carefully, opening boxes and seeing if everything was there according to my memory. I emailed John for a complete inventory list so I could be sure because there were a number of things, e.g., the tram trolley, that were missing. I also emailed pictures back of the damaged boxes. Several phone calls with JP determined that there was one box in the Tracer back seat, another in its trunk and a couple in the garage closet. Once those were all found and John's inventory list received, it was determined that the four Rohn thrust bearings were missing along with the Phillystran thimbles and end caps. These items seemed to be associated with a missing box, but we later determined that they may have never made it into the container in Miami. (The "missing box" may have been Lisandro's airplane.)

I finally got to Chris & JP's home at noon, and JP was there eating lunch on a break from work. I presented each of them, including Andy and

Cindy with the P4 Antenna Party T-shirts that I had made up with the photo of the old antenna farm we were about to dismantle. From there, I did my grocery shopping and returned home with the shipping documents JP gave me. He stopped by after work and we carefully accounted for each item and box. There was one box not there and we initially assumed it was the missing parts, but since Lisandro's airplane was NOT accounted for, we ultimately decided that the airplane box must be the "missing box", and the parts didn't make the shipment. However, JP and Chris kept after the local freight handlers to keep looking for it. As well, they still hadn't delivered the 20' mast, so JP was expediting that.

Friday, 8 February. Neither the mast was delivered nor the missing box found. By the afternoon, I emailed John to order replacement parts for overnight delivery in time to put in his/Andy's/Tom's luggage for their Tuesday night flight. I also discovered damage to one leg of a Rohn 25G section, it being completely smashed. JP and I pondered how to fix it and he ultimately proposed to simply cut off the bad end and similarly shorten the other two legs, re-drilling the two bolt holes in each. In the afternoon, I unrolled the four radials on the Beverage termination in the north corner of the yard, not knowing until Sunday when I coiled up the Beverage itself, that they actually weren't connected!

Amazingly the three Beverages worked fine for me, providing the directivity and S/N improvement that I needed on 80 meters. I couldn't use them on 40 because the 80 transmit signal created too much RFI. I tested out my RTTY setup, tuned the amps and discovered that the 87A faulted out with error 01110 after key-up. For CW or SSB, it was fine, but with RTTY key down for more than 2-3 seconds, the fault repeatedly occurred at power levels above 500 watts. That was a bummer, but I ran 500 watts during the contest on 80 and 15 meters. The 86 gave full output with no issues on 40 and 20. Just before CQWW WPX RTTY started at 8 p.m. local, I checked the yard for the 20' mast and it still had not been delivered. But sometime after that, it was delivered on Friday night unbeknownst to me and just left outside the front wall.

Thirty minutes into the contest, my 40 meter computer locked up. I've never had that happen and literally had to kill its power because it was

so frozen even Ctrl-Alt-Del wouldn't work. I lost my excellent run frequency plus five minutes or so of getting set up again. Somehow in all that, one of the three computers picked up the 74 contacts from the practice session the night before and dumped them into my log! I didn't take time to extract those QSOs, figuring I'd clean it up at my next real break, so it created some temporary dupes with stations I worked again in the contest. A couple hours later, the WriteLog network failed, so then I was giving out parallel serial numbers on 80 and 40. When Europe died down after their sunrise, I took my first break of a couple hours around 5 a.m. local time. My WPX SO strategy is to work 40 and 80 whenever they are even marginally open because my rate only has to be half what it is on the high bands to get equivalent points. Amazingly, my QSOs and mults were slightly ahead of 2007.

Saturday, 9 February. I started in on 40 and 20 around 9 a.m., quickly moving the 40 side to 15. The rate was OK but not nearly what it was in 2007 and barely equivalent, point-wise, to the previous night's low band point rate. As the day wore on, I lost the lead I had the night before and slipped further behind my 2007 pace. I took an hour break late afternoon for a shower and dinner before beginning another long night on 40 and 80. I noticed that JP was in the back yard sawing and pounding on the Rohn 25G leg, but I didn't interrupt my contest routine to interact with him.

He had opened the kitchen door to get power but otherwise was very discreet about not bothering me in any way. I found out later that he also had moved the 20' mast into the back yard. Back in the contest, I was carefully watching my rates and totals compared to the hourly statistics from 2007 I had posted off to the side of the left LCD. I was a couple of hundred QSOs behind, all due to poorer high band performance. When I quit 40 and 80 early Sunday morning, I was just slightly ahead of what I had done on the low bands in 2007. So, overall I was discouraged because I figured the high bands on Sunday would be even lower rate as they were the prior year.

Sunday, 10 February. After a four-hour break, I started up my last 2.5 hours at 10:30 a.m., based on that being the highest high band rate of 2007 and the previous day. What a surprise when the rate jumped to 150 and stayed there, the highest rate across both years! Too bad I couldn't trade

the slower Saturday hours for these much better hours on Sunday. When my 30 hours expired, I stopped and fixed some breakfast at 1 p.m. I called JP, and he agreed to come over at 3 p.m.

[Andy: Ed modestly doesn't mention that he, once again, turned in the highest claimed score in the world, in spite of these operational difficulties!]

We first carefully opened and inventoried each F-12 box. I sent the details to Tom/John/Andy via email. It appeared that everything was there despite three of the boxes being completely open on the end. I did request that Tom bring extra hardware, especially 1/4" SS for bolting. I rolled up the Beverage radial, the Beverage wire in the yard and the three Beverage coaxes, moving them out of the way of the anticipated antenna/tower work areas in the yard and the *cunucu*.

We located one of the barrels out in the *cunucu* for attaching the tram for the Rohn 45G antennas. The backyard garden hose actually reached clear out there, and JP filled it with water. I climbed the Rohn 45G and took down the 80 and 160 wire antennas with JP's help. The 80 was garbage in our view, but we carefully rolled up the 160 for later use. I assembled the tram trolley and we laid out the tram wire. We unrolled the 600-foot rope and cut it in half, also knotting a loop in the middle of one piece so it could be used for temporary guying as we removed guys. We discussed various aspects of how we expected to work the next two days, using John's project outline as a guide. We organized material in the garage, but JP strongly advised to not leave tools out overnight on the back patio. Thus, we chose an area in the living room for tool staging. This was the first step to transforming the entire cottage into a tower/antenna workshop!

At this point, I had naively assumed that JP would be the on-the-tower guy, but quickly learned that he was expecting the same of me because he really doesn't like tower work. He does climb his towers, but only out of necessity. This was a sobering thought, as I realized that somehow I was going to be dealing directly with whatever problems we encountered in getting the severely corroded parts disassembled. I foresaw potential problems and delays, worrying that we would get stuck and not have much accomplished before reinforcements arrived on Wednesday. JP, or course, was ever-optimistic

and convinced we'd have it all down by Tuesday night. We knocked off at dusk; I took a shower and went over to Marina Pirata for my contest celebration dinner ... alone, of course!

Monday, 11 February. JP arrived at 8:30 a.m., and I took the gin pole up to the top of the Rohn 45. Using it, we pulled up the tram wire and got set up to lower the 20/40. First, though, I disconnected all cables and began descending the tower, detaching them from the legs. K2LE showed up and I asked Andy to start disassembling the cables on the messenger cable, carefully rolling them up by the shack wall.

This took a while, and he stuck with it, although since he stored all the cables on the ends of the new Rohn 45G sections they had to be moved over to the house wall later. While Andy was doing this, JP and I readied the tram for bringing down the Yagi. JP had a lot of trouble getting the cotter pin out, then back in, on one of the wire rope sheaves on the trolley. Eventually, he succeeded and we pulled it up to me at the top of the tower. I was relieved when I was able to undo all the U-bolts, and we "trammed" down the antenna with JP and Andy on the pull rope. Once the antenna was on the tram line, I came down and helped them move the antenna off into the *cunucu*.

Next, we setup temporary guys 10 feet below the top set of permanent guys. My first attempt to remove the top set of guys was by hack-sawing through the Big Grips attached to the ears of the Rohn 45G top plate. After 30 minutes and only getting halfway through one of them, they sent up JP's grinder and the long extension cord. That made short work of cutting through the Big Grips but showered me with sparks. It also showed that there was plenty of shiny pure steel still left in the grips.

As rusty and bad as they looked on the outside, they were really quite fine overall from an integrity standpoint. I had never worked with fiberglass guys and worried how this would go, but it was surprisingly straightforward to lower them with the pull rope while JP and Andy walked them out from the tower. I had JP carefully mark each guy with duct tape and Sharpie notations, plus some notes on a paper in the house. We wanted to remember where each guy had been attached as part of the decision later in the week on reassembly.

I decided to try lowering the entire top section with rotor and mast rather than spending time up in the air trying to disassemble it. The concern, of course, was its weight, but if we could get it down in one piece, it would save a lot of time getting the tower down.

The top section would be much easier to disassemble on the ground. JP then decided to use his old white Toyota sedan on the pull rope, and this was right on because JP and Andy could not have lowered that weight on the pull rope. Again, I was pleasantly surprised to be able to remove the leg bolts and pry the top section off the tower. However, what happened next was the scariest thing on the whole trip. The gin pole slipped in its clamp and the top of it got beneath the top plate of the top section such that the section was jammed and hanging precariously on the top of the gin pole. I thought we had bought the farm at that point because I couldn't get the section back in place and I couldn't get it off the gin pole to lower it to the ground. After 20 minutes or so of struggling with it, I managed to break it loose and we lowered it to the ground.

We then proceeded on with removing tower sections and guys. Chris came and got JP for a quick 30-minute lunch while Andy and I took a short break before continuing on. Andy left mid-afternoon, but by 5:30 p.m., the Rohn 45G was completely disassembled. I felt good about that accomplishment and was tired, and ready for a shower. But ... JP had other plans and wanted to get the 10/15 antenna down! So, we set up the tram using a second barrel of water in a different location. Shortly after dark the Yagi was lying in the backyard, and JP finally agreed to call it a day. I showered and fixed dinner in the cottage: steak, fresh broccoli, red wine and a big garden salad. In the dark I took a few photos and emailed them to Andy/John/Tom with a short summary of our progress.

Tuesday, 12 February. JP again arrived at 8:30 a.m., and we began working on the 10/15 tower. First, though, I had to reach up and get the 6-meter Yagi down, which took some doing. We ran it down the tram line on a pulley without using the trolley. Then we lowered the top section as one piece again. This time the pull rope ran over to a second pulley at the base of the Rohn 45G tower and JP used his car. Later I asked him to start using the Tracer so we could be sure it would work as well for the rest of the week when he wasn't there. The wind really

picked up compared to Monday, so working on the smaller Rohn 25G tower was more uncomfortable. Once I moved to the C31 tower I was VERY uncomfortable because it had such ineffective lower guys and moved around a lot in the wind. I could see that we needed to remove the top north guy to lower the C31, so we installed a temporary guy 6 feet down using the yellow messenger cable rope (or, maybe a similar rope from the garage closet?). I was still worried and we added more rope guying and hoped that the wind might subside a bit.

But it never really let up, so we went ahead and lowered the C31. Now, JP had rigged two extra pulleys on the pull rope to route it around the yard to the Rohn 45G base so he could run the car between the gate and the back wall again. Both ends of the C31 got caught in trees and we wrestled with it a lot before getting it down and resting on the back wall. Also, the water barrel tram line anchor moved, so we added a second barrel tied onto it. We spent the rest of the day trying to figure out how to disassemble the tower in the high wind with its inadequate guying. Furthermore, JP had gotten sick after returning from his quick 30-minute lunch and was barfing all afternoon but refusing to quit. He was determined to get that tower down! Ultimately, though, we didn't feel comfortable doing so. After showering, I went to Brisas del Mar for dinner.

Wednesday, 13 February. JP had to return to work, but Andy showed up (busting through the front door unannounced as I was eating breakfast!) and we stripped the cables off the C31 tower. I thought I would need more ground support for this job, so I diverted our labor to disassembling the three yagis. We were able to accomplish that in time so both of us could drive to the airport and pick up John/Andy/Tom at 2 p.m. Andy rented a car, and after everyone was back at the cottage I presented them with their antenna party T-shirts and gave a quick tour of the property and the status of things.



Ed doing what he likes least (tower climbing).



More of same.



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ANAHEIM, CA

(Near Disneyland)
933 N. Euclid St., 92801
(714) 533-7373

(800) 854-6046

Janet, KL7MF, Mgr.
anaheim@hamradio.com

BURBANK, CA

2416 W. Victory Bl., 91506
(818) 842-1786

(800) 854-6046

Eric, KA6IHT, Mgr.
Victory Blvd. at Buena Vista
1 mi. west I-5
burbank@hamradio.com

OAKLAND, CA

2210 Livingston St., 94606
(510) 534-5757

(800) 854-6046

Mark, W17YN, Mgr.
I-880 at 23rd Ave. ramp
oakland@hamradio.com

SAN DIEGO, CA

5375 Kearny Villa Rd., 92123
(858) 560-4900

(800) 854-6046

Tom, KM6K, Mgr.
Hwy. 163 & Claremont Mesa
sandiego@hamradio.com

SUNNYVALE, CA

510 Lawrence Exp. #102
94085
(408) 736-9496

(800) 854-6046

Rick, N6DQ, Co-Mgr.
Howard, W6HOC, Co-Mgr
So. from Hwy. 101
sunnyvale@hamradio.com

NCCC
1560 Klamath Drive
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

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