



Publication of the  
Northern California  
Contest Club



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NCCC Net  
Thursday 8 PM  
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*Guests are always welcome at the NCCC! Please join us.*

## Annual Holiday Dinner

**Monday, December 13, 2010**

**Date: Monday, 13 December 2010**

**Time:** 6:00pm schmooz, 6:30pm dinner, 7:15pm program

**Location:** Michael's at Shoreline, 2960 Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View, CA 94043 (650) 962-1014

**Directions:** [Michael's at Shoreline](#)

Click on <http://nccc.cc/meetings.html> for details on menu choices, RSVP deadlines, prices, etc.



### FB's Message

By Jack Brindle, W6FB

Tis the Season!

Wow! The year is just flying by. Just yesterday we were enjoying the summer sunshine, and now we are in the holiday season. Over the past few months we have enjoyed quite a bit of contesting and contest preparations, talked about it, and in general worked very hard to get ourselves very competitive. With the Sweepstakes contests now completed for this year we can certainly affirm that contest season is upon us. There is not much time left in 2010, but just enough for the 10 meter contest as well as a pair of very good 160meter contests (ARRL 160 and the Stew Perry). And don't

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forget that the NCCC 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Operating Event is still under way! We have until the end of the year to hand out more QSOs, and opportunities to earn those really cool 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary certificates. Many of us earned our certificates during Sweepstakes, CQP or some of the earlier contesting events, and now is the time to get on the air to help others earn their certificate as well. Hurry though – we only have until the end of the year to hand out those way-cool /40 QSOs!

NCCCs work hard at competing, contesting, and building (skills and stations). We have much to give thanks for. We are some 600 strong, and continuing to build membership. These aren't just names, though. Our members do a great job contributing to the hobby, the club, the community and to their fellow members. Whether it be teaching newcomers new tricks (well, *new* to them), offering advice for improving their station or skills, or maybe handling emergency communications in the fires that have been so prevalent over the last couple of years, our members really do contribute in many different areas. We all can be thankful for not only that, but the great friendships we have forged through the club and this great hobby.

While we are at it, giving thanks, it is also time to celebrate! The NCCC Holiday Celebration is coming up shortly. We will all have time to come together to talk, have a few laughs, tell some stories, and appreciate each other (and our significant others). This year it is a special celebration, a time to remember 40 years of members, some who have come and gone, and others who have stayed in the area. This will certainly be a special celebration, with good food, good times and especially good friendships for all! Be sure to plan to attend – the celebration will be at Michael's of Shoreline in Mountain View. Look elsewhere in this issue for more information, and on line at the NCCC website meeting page (<http://www.nccc.cc/meetings.html>).

Finally, a word about Sweepstakes. WOW! All the planning, all the work, all the discussions came to fruition in November. The CW weekend was fantastic. Once again we outdid ourselves. Conditions were almost perfect, and we pretty much “lit up” the contest. It appears to be the best CW weekend ever for a club. Then, came the Phone weekend. The results are still trickling in, but it doesn't look too bad at all either. Yes, we were challenged by the weather, and while some of us didn't quite reach our goals, others did the job quite nicely. We learned many things, like how to handle QSOs through the precipitation static, and we pushed and endeavored through the contest. And in the end, it appears that we did quite well. We should learn quite a bit more as to how we did in the club competition by the December meeting, but no matter how that turns out, we can congratulate ourselves for another job well done, with optimism that we will once again have a new Sweepstakes gavel when all is said and done.

See everyone at the Holiday Celebration, and for all from the W6FB extended family, have a joyous, happy, wonderful and safe holiday season!

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## **VP/CC**

By Chris Tate, N6WM

A new year; A new challenge!

And now... the build up for something we have not done for a long time, a serious run at the WPX contest series!

We made it through Sweepstakes, and many rose to the challenge of exceeding their goals. Some were successful despite adverse weather conditions! But there is no doubt that some have become a bit weary of the annual Sweepstakes challenge, and have asked for something new. Well, as promised, we are going for something new and exciting early next year, a serious club effort in the 2011 WPX contest series.

We will be officially competing in the WPX club competition early next year. If you have a DX station that can be activated this is the time, so please make plans to do so as soon as possible! Our opponents, the PVRC and Bavarian Contest Club will likely fire up with monster efforts so we have to work hard to prepare and execute the NCCC swarm operation well in advance.

Start reading about how you can contribute to the NCCC WPX effort. The information stream on the reflector will start very soon. Large multi-operator operations will need to be QRV and unlike SS will be encouraged to do so. For the newer ops as well as the veterans in the group, get ready for opportunities to put in some BIC time!

NCCC members with DX QTH's scores will be included in the overall competition. If you need ops for your overseas multi's, please get the word out and invite willing folks to travel there with you. Local stations capable of producing big scores as multi-operator efforts are strongly encouraged to plan to do so.

This is gonna be fun and something we have not prepared for officially as a club for many years!

On that note, I want to extend my deepest thanks to the entire NCCC membership, for everything you did to make the 2010 ARRL Sweepstakes contest a success. No matter

how the results come out after the number crunchers are done, in my book, this club is already a winner.

73, Happy New Year and best wishes for another fantastic year of Northern California contesting in 2011!

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**“King for a Day” at W7RN  
(A 2010 Sweepstakes SSB Adventure)**

By Nick Ulman, KZ2V

Everything was planned nicely: I would operate SS phone as part of the W6YX school entry with N7MH. I was looking forward to an entire weekend available for radiosport, an unusually long opening on my schedule. Mike and I were going to set up a two-op, two-radio (but only one transmitting at a time) mental octopus system.

Then, Friday afternoon, I happened to glance through the NCCC reflector digest and noticed a plea for an operator to go to W7RN. Hmm...

Now, understand that I am a ham radio peasant with only a single inverted-V so low that I can touch it if I jump. I enjoy a few hours of contesting now and then, but I've never made what is considered a serious effort by NCCC standards. I've never been in the slightest danger of winning anything except in absurdly narrow categories like “SOSB QRP Assisted SCV Section.” From time to time I “help” the multi-op efforts at W6YX by slowing down the rate and miscopying crucial multiplier call signs.

When one of the Kings of ham radio contesting opens up his castle, it is an opportunity a peasant cannot pass up. I sent an email to N6WM: Has anyone filled the spot at W7RN yet? Chris quickly emailed back and told me to call K5RC right away. I cleared the new plan with the XYL (“I’ll be back on Sunday night”) and made sure N7MH could do without me (as if there was any doubt). Tom, K5RC, said, “You better leave soon to beat the storm that’s coming.”

I rushed back to my house, grabbed tire chains, a winter jacket, one set of extra underwear and literally nothing else. I was on the road from Mountain View just after 4 pm. It took an hour in traffic just to get to Livermore. I talked to the XYL about the weather. She said, “Let’s get four wheel drive on our next car”. I called Tom. He said that it was only raining on I-80, so keep going. I did and had smooth sailing, although wet, to Auburn.

Perhaps 15 miles east of Auburn it started to snow. No accumulation, though, and temperature still above freezing. Then suddenly traffic slowed to a crawl: chain control! Maximum speed with chains is 30-40 mph and they make a terrible racket: zum-zum-zum-zum-zum-zum!

Soon it started to snow harder and stick. The temperature dropped to about 28-30 F. Every so often one of my fellow lunatics on the freeway would spin out and slow everyone else down. There were at least three times when all progress stopped for half an hour or more. Tom helped my spirits by calling every hour, but my progress reports were depressing: "Blue Canyon", "No, not at Donner Summit yet", "Moving about 5 miles per hour", etc. Crawling along through the storm was fun until about midnight; after that it was a real chore. I had to be very careful slogging along at about 18 - 20 mph with a concrete wall on the left and "Kenworth" or "Peterbilt" on the right.

The miles crawled by. It got later and later. Eventually I descended into Reno and dumped the chains. I-395, a four or five lane freeway, was all mine as I neared Virginia City. Tom's driveway is steep (he lives at the top of a mountain, of course) and I couldn't face chaining up again to climb it, so Tom graciously met me at the bottom at 4 am in K7AFO's 4WD truck, 12 hours after my journey had begun. I went to sleep soon after.

I got up around 10:30 or 11:00 and pulled up the window shade. Whoowee! There was a tremendous tower reaching heavenward a la "Jack and the Beanstalk" with massive Yagis sprouting from the trunk. I pulled up the shade on the other window: Another tower bigger than the first! I went downstairs to meet Tom and eat breakfast.

There was not too much time for chit-chat as the contest was fast approaching. Tom took me over to the shack to get oriented. Whoowee! Fellow peasants I tell you a King does not have merely one or two amplifiers, he has a *wall* of amplifiers! (There is one for each band.) A dedicated touch screen controls the vast antenna farm. You want a stack of 40-meter Yagis pointing at W4? Just touch the screen! How about many, many elements on 20-meters pointed directly at VE8EV? Just touch the screen! The radio signals originate from one of the two all-K3 SO2R stations. (That's four K3's if you're keeping score at home.)

We quickly recorded some messages ("CQ Sweepstakes, W7 Radio Nevada!") and mumbled something about "strategy" – high bands when the sun is up, low bands when it goes down, or something like that. I said my contest goal was to get back to Mountain View safely in less time than the outbound trip. I figured I already had 12 hours of BIC; any radio contacts were a bonus.

The contest began and I started out on 15 meters. (I've know that there is another, higher band called "10 meters", but I haven't heard of anyone actually using it, so I never tuned the radios there.) The first thing you notice when operating from a big station is that when you call CQ, people answer! Sometimes there are lots of them and you can make two contacts or even three in a single minute! That's fun!

During lulls in the rate, I cleared out all the unworked stations in the band map with 20 or 30 minutes of search and pounce. You can do as many as 50 per hour that way if the band map is sprinkled with new stations. Sometimes when a run slowed down a little, I would visit the tree outside the shack for relief. (It's a good idea to stay hydrated at 6,500 feet.) I would come back from a break and CQ on the same frequency I left a few minutes before, and pretty often someone would call back immediately and the run would continue as if I never left.

Every now and then Tom would say, "Have you tried twenty yet?" or "You don't have many Q's on twenty." When all was said (literally) and done I had about six times as many contacts on 15 as on 20 which Tom thought was very strange. The reason was simple: Whenever I went to 20 the rate went down because I couldn't understand what people were saying with all the QRM. On 15 everything sounded clear and crisp.

A few things started to become apparent as the contest went on. I would like to pass along to my fellow peasants some tips about proper etiquette when the King speaks to you. Please realize that the King has directed vast quantities of aluminum to focus exactly 1,500 Watts (no more, no less) right in your direction. That is why you are deafened by his booming signal. The aluminum also works in reverse so that the King hears your every whisper. However, hard as it may be to believe, your signal is not always very loud in the King's ears. It could be that you are feeding a wet noodle with only two or three watts, or perhaps propagation is just not that good so it would be hard to hear you even if you were WWV. In any case, here is a principle that may come in handy: *Only tell the King the exact nugget of information he asks for!* Here is how quite a few contacts proceeded:

Me (King for a Day): "W3ABC two-ninety-three uniform W7RN fifty-nine Nevada"

PVRC Peasant: "Uhhh...(pause)...OK, let's see, thanks for five-nine in Nevada...please copy my number twentarglegflapuffalpha W3ABC seventy-eight Maryland DC, QSL?"

King: "W3ABC, my number again please"

Peasant: "Uhhh... twentarglegflapuffalpha W3ABC seventy-eight Maryland DC"

King: "W3ABC, serial number only again please"

Peasant: "uffeezzorkty alpha W3ABC seventy-eight Maryland DC"

King: "I've got everything except the serial number, serial number ONLY!"

*Et cetera*

Sometimes when I finally did get the serial number, but there was still a small doubt about the rest, I would say something like:

King: “W8XYZ, it’s twenty-one bravo, check ninety-nine, Minnesota, right?”

At this point if the peasant said *only* “roger, roger” (assuming I had all the info correct), then the contact was complete. But, if the feeble peasant, trying to be helpful, *repeated the correct info*, it actually made things worse! When that happened I had to wonder if everything was OK or if the peasant was trying to change something.

Peasants, please realize that most of the time the King *already knows what you are going to say* except for the serial number! That is because the King has got a pre-fill file from Dr. Evil so most of the time he merely has to verify that you are telling the truth. Thus, the King can change the information flow requirements of a contact. All he really needs is your call sign, serial number, a “good feeling” that what you said matches what is already on his screen, and the all-important “roger, roger”! (Why hams think “roger” means “yes” is a mystery to me, but that is another story. In the ham world “roger” = “yes”, absolutely.)

I think the best peasant strategy for filling in the King was to repeat (*only*) the requested information *several times quickly*. That seemed to give the peasant’s message a better chance of finding clear reception time.

The next thing that was quite surprising was that out of 1,306 contest exchanges, fifty were dupes! That’s about 4%. I have no idea if that is considered a high or low dupe rate. Here is one that really stood out. Early on in the contest I was contacted by W1AF in the S (school) category. I recognized that call sign and said, “Are you at Harvard?” “Roger, roger!!” You can imagine my surprise when I was called by W1AF again the next day. Aren’t those smarty-pants at Harvard sharp enough to avoid dupes? Did they not hear my booming call sign correctly in their headsets? They later apologized via email; some kind of logging screw up blamed on software. Probably Microsoft’s fault – that place was started by a Harvard man, of course.

Anyway my policy as King for a Day was to work all dupes without comment. I did question a very few people and they always swore we had not worked before. I have a sneaking suspicion that some stations thought that my check (59) was their signal report and also it’s possible that some people thought you could contact a station once per band rather than the actual rule which is once per contest.

I was only a peasant at a King's station but there were several things that I could have done better. My messages were good, but not perfect. If you're going to use a message more than a thousand times it behooves you to make it a very precisely crafted message, spoken clearly and fully tweaked up in Audacity. N6CCH gave me some helpful tips on this, but I did not get to use them in SS.

Another thing is that my habit was to verify the complete call sign before offering any information to the other station. It would have been better to proceed with the information immediately even with a partial call sign because the other station has to mention their call sign in the exchange. That is usually a good enough second chance to get it right.

I wasted a few seconds welcoming people with "check 10" to ham radio, but I don't regret that. Without more peasants, the King will not be able to set new contesting records. One time when things were slow someone told me "Minnesota" when the pre-fill said "Wisconsin". I said, "Did you move from Wisconsin?" The poor guy then launched into a mini rag chew about how he sometimes operated from his fishing cabin or some such – my bad.

I'm sure there are many, many other things I could have done better such as maKing a few contacts on twenty meters with all those stacked Yagis twisting in the wind. But I made roughly 5 to 8 dB more contacts than I ever have in any other contest and that was with the brain fog that resulted from the overnight trek to get to the station. I made just about the same number of contacts on Sunday as on Saturday which is probably a roundabout way of saying I should have made more on Saturday. Overall I was very pleased!

As a peasant, I am sometimes disappointed to read 3830 reports from Kings that say things like, "Only a part time effort, not really trying, I don't really like this contest, etc." when they post scores 10 or 20 dB greater than mine in half the time. Spread the enthusiasm to the little people!

While I was absorbed in the contest I did not notice that it had kept snowing. A lot. I called the XYL and explained that I might not get back until Monday. She understood. The trip back (on Monday) was relatively easy. In daytime, after all, how hard can it be? I did have to put on chains twice because I took them off too soon the first time. And I spent some time helping a girl, and couple of desperate lady tourists from Belgium, get the chains off their cars.



King for a Day! What an amazing experience! Thank you very much to Tom, K5RC, proprietor of the Comstock Memorial (Super) Station W7RN, and his XYL Midge K7AFO for hosting me. They could not have been nicer and they do a great service to amateur radio contesting by allowing others to experience their wonderful hospitality and operate their tremendous radio station.

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## **CQP Alpine Lake Lodge**

By Larry, W4UAT

For many years we traveled to Monitor Pass east of Markleville, CA, where we got caught in very strong snow storms and high winds. We got real cold and that really got to us older guys. So after the contest we packed up it was decided to find a better protected place and at a lower altitude -- 8,400 ft was a bit high.



L to R: Bill, N6BM; Fred, K6DGW; Bill, WB6JJJ; Larry, W4UAT; and Don, W6OA. Missing are Jimmy, KF6VU and Jim, W6GPM.

During the summer Bill, N6BM, and Larry, W4UAT, went looking for a cabin we could use. During June, Bill found the Lake Alpine Lodge and we drove up to the look at the lodges. We settled on the Ponderosa lodge. It sleeps 10 and has a full bath, hot water,

full kitchen, and real nice beds. They're a bit soft for this writers back, but great sleeping.

For those of you reading who do not know of Alpine Lake Resort, it located east of Stockton on highway #4 past Bear Mountain ski resort in Alpine County.

Cabins are equipped for housekeeping with kitchens including refrigerators, stoves, a basic set of pots and pans, dishes, toasters, coffee makers and a microwave oven.

Bedding and towels are provided. There are outdoor barbeque stands in the summertime, too.



**Fred, K6DGW, doing his stint**

Guests need to provide food items, seasonings, condiments, toiletries and other consumables. All cabins have heat. There is no phone service or TV in the cabins. The cabins have stall showers (except Ponderosa and Sequoia, which have a tub/shower combination). In the summer, there are also three tent cabins available. The tent cabins are not heated. Our cabin had two DVD/TV setups.

On the first day, we unpacked the trucks and put all the antenna materials in place. We put up the operating table and hooked up all the cables and so on. Don, W6OA, removed

the breaker box cover and installed a 220VAC breaker thus providing 220v for the amplifier. All the wall sockets were the 3 prong type so no problem there. Weather was very nice Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. It started to cloud up late Friday evening and it sprinkled / rained lightly as we were cooking our evening meal.



**Jimmy, KF6VU, waiting away at the keyboard**

We fired up the DVD/TV and watched Avatar. Hi Hi.

Equipment set up was a little different this year. We used a IC7600, an automatic antenna tuner, and automatic antenna switch. For more oomph, we used a Heathkit SB220 Amp. On the lower bands, we had a rotary 40M Dipole, 80 Dipole in the pine tree, and the 3 element Cushcraft we have used all these years. We used N1MM software and the Toshiba laptop computer. Even though we were nearly 1000 feet lower than Monitor Pass, it seems that propagation was just a little better. It took several days to verify the score. We worked all 58 multipliers. Below is the Summary Score submitted to the contest committee.



Don, W6OA, tries his hand at things.

QSOPARTY Score Summary Sheet

Start Date : 2010-10-02

CallSign Used : N6A

Operator(s) : N6A

Operator Category : MULTI-ONE COUNTY EXPEDITION

Software : N1MM Logger V10.9.3

Operators: W4UAT, W6OA, K6DGW, N6BM, WB6JJJ, W6GPM, KF6VU

Band	Mode	QSOs	Pts	Sec
3.5	CW	121	363	1
3.5	LSB	173	346	0
7	CW	222	666	1
7	LSB	182	364	7
14	CW	337	1011	35
14	USB	303	606	6
21	CW	147	441	3
21	USB	185	370	5
Total Both		1670	4167	58
Score :		241,686		

The 1670 QSOs was several hundred QSO's more than we have made in past few years. The resort facility stayed open during our stay. The restaurant was open every day for lunch and dinner. A few of us did take a few of our meals there.

The contest ended Sunday at 3:00PM PST. We tore down the station, packed the trucks, took the tribander down, and did a walk thru of the cabin making sure we had washed and put all away and did not leave any equipment.. We took a vote and made reservation for next year. We paid the cabin rent. The resort staff was really nice. We were told that the Ponderosa Lodge will be remodeled for next year. So, it will be a little nicer inside. I'll tell you, it was marvelous to wake up in the mornings and smell coffee brewing. We were never short of coffee.

One of our operators had packed some dry ice in his cooler and during the day, Saturday, he opened the cooler and said "who took my dry ice?"

We all answered, "Mother nature did it." He didn't realize it had evaporated and left nothing. There was a big laugh in the cabin. We never got the Internet hookup to work. Each time we keyed the amplifier, we would lose the connection. However, cell calls were made home easily. This was one of the better trips to Alpine County and we will be doing it again. Hope that everyone will try to make plans for next year. Best regards to everyone and thanks for all the contacts.



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