



NEXT NCCC MEETINGS
DATE: Saturday, DECEMBER 13
HOLIDAY BANQUET
 (see details elsewhere in this JUG)

DATE: Monday, JANUARY 12
SOUTH BAY YACHT CLUB

DIRECTIONS BELOW!

The program for the January 12 meeting will be "Hey, mon, we've gone native: the story of 6Y4A." This is going to be a spectacular multimedia presentation by Kenny, K2KW, and other survivors of the championship effort at 6Y4A in 1997 CQ WW CW, featuring photos, audio presentations of pileup management, and video. Dinner will be catered in and will be your choice of fish or pork for \$10 including beverages (full bar available separately). This is the location where we held a meeting a few months ago that earned rave reviews for ambiance, location, food and ease of access and parking.

Directions to South Beach Yacht Club:

From the SOUTH: Take 280 North, and in SF stay to the left until 280 becomes King Street. (Don't take any exit to the right!) Follow King Street for a few blocks until it merges onto The Embarcadero. Turn right into the Pier 40 parking lot -- if the parking spaces are filled, drive into the building on the pier for more spaces. The SBYC is the first building next to the yacht harbor, right off the parking lot and adjacent to the pier building just noted for additional parking.

From the NORTH: Get on The Embarcadero and Pier 40 is just South of the Bay Bridge.

From the EAST: Cross the Bay Bridge into San Francisco and get on The Embarcadero to Pier 40 just South of the bridge.

Tentative plans for February's meeting will feature a special joint meeting of NCCC and NCDXC held on FRIDAY, February 13, (Note the change in the day of the week -- this is NCDXC's normal date and place.) A two part program of interest to all hams will be presented: (a) "Web surfing your way through ham radio," a guided tour of all the best ham radio sites featuring information on contesting, DXing, vintage gear, callbook lookup and much more, and (b) "How to cope with the RF exposure rules and not get burned," a special presentation by Jim Maxwell, W6CF (with backup by Brad Wyatt, K6WR) on the new FCC rules that affect all amateurs regarding compliance with RF exposure limitations. This is a must - see presentation!

HOLIDAY BANQUET

"Ho, Ho, Ho" says Santa (N6BT)! Don't miss out on Santa's annual visit to the NCCC holiday banquet. Get your reservations in early so he knows how many sleighs and reindeer he has to charter for all the gifts.

Like most everything else this year with the NCCC, we are breaking tradition and holding our festivities at a Chinese restaurant in Los Altos. Here are the particulars.

Date : Saturday, 13 December 1997 (ARRL 10-Meter Contest, but the band will likely be closed by banquet time)

Time : 6:30PM

Place : Chef Wang's Restaurant, 5100 El Camino Real, Los Altos (just North of Rengstorff Avenue, or check the NCCC web page for a map.) (650) 965-2689.

No-host bar

Per person price of \$25

Banquet Menu:

Appetizers ... Spicy Wonton, BBQ Pork, Marinated Vegetables, Steamed Pork Bun, Chinese Chicken Salad, Fantail Prawns, Deep Fried Crab Wonton

Main Dishes ... Peking Duck, Kung Pao Chicken, Honey Walnut Prawns, Broccoli Beef, Dried Sautéed String Beans, Chef Wang's Fish Fillet, House Fried Rice & Chow Mein

Dessert ... Ice Cream & Lichee

Please make your reservations ASAP by sending a

check to : Ed Muns
POB 1877
Los Gatos, CA 95031

Attendance by "Significant Others" and guests is encouraged. Dress is casual to dressy. I'm told casual is not meant to be T-shirts, jeans or shorts! If you have any questions, please contact me.

73, Ed - W0YK

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ANDY'S DANDIES

SS Ruminations

Well, I think we ended up doing very well as a club. There were certainly many club members turning in fine scores from maximum 24-hour efforts. Many others who had time constraints, or problems with stations or neighbors nevertheless got on for a while and did what they could.

Thank you one and all! Don't forget to send in your logs to the ARRL and clearly indicate your score is for the "Northern California Contest Club" (spell it out to make sure there's no ambiguity.) CW logs must be postmarked by Dec. 3, and Phone logs by Dec. 17! You can also send them in electronically -- See October QST, p. 116 for details.

SS CW saw many fine scores from our area by club members, which will be covered in the next "TV-

Guide" column, so my maanderings here are mainly about SS Phone, which is still fresh in my mind.

Special mention must be made of Rich, N7TR, who appears, based on claimed scores, to have come in second in phone only to a ringer, WP2Z operated by K4MA - a fine station in a rare location -- surely a totally unfair advantage. I looked at Rich's rate sheet: would you believe 186 qso's the first hour, and eight straight hours over 100 q's per hour? I find it hard to believe it's even possible to have 186 complete SS exchanges in an hour, but somehow Rich did it, hi. Whenever I get a rate in SS up above 100, I'm suddenly slowed down to parade rest, as my ex-military father-in-law used to say, by needing a bunch of repeats due to qrm, or by the need to walk someone who's not in the contest through the exchange.

It's interesting that Rich probably would have won the entire thing, except that WP2Z had a 10m opening on Sunday that netted him 484 QSO's. Rich was way ahead after the first day, but WP2Z managed eight hours of over 100 q's on Sunday. Nevertheless, congrats to Rich on what is reportedly the eighth best score of all time.

WP2Z posted his section breakdown for his winning total of 2379 q's. The highest California QSO counts were SCV and LAX tied at 45, with ORG at 27, SV 25, SJV 18, and EB 12. Lots of those q's are NCCC'rs. Thanks! For the curious, his top section was OH at 124, followed by IL at 121. PVRC was also out in force, as MDC had 68 q's with WP2Z and VA 73.

There were many other fine scores posted both modes, including by K2KW, N6RO, K6AW, W6NL, N6TV, N6NT, WC6H, NI6T and more. N6RO ("Radio Oakley") managed to run two separate stations during SS Phone, one a multi-op by N6RO and K3EST and the other a single op by K6AW. Those two, plus N6RO's CW single-op totaled some 655k points for the club! And many thanks to our friends who are also members of other clubs (such as K6PU, N6TNW&X, AC6DQ and K6KM in the Mother Lode DX/Contest Club) who elect to report their scores for NCCC.

I personally gave it an all out effort both modes high power, just as I exhorted club members to do. I was pretty pleased with my score on CW (although I unaccountably missed not one, but two, sections.)

Phone, was truly a grind, and I ended up doing just a bit better than cw. I had expected to do better due to the ease of the exchanges, increased activity, etc. I forgot that 40 and 80 are tougher on phone than on cw, so that I was really slogging along Saturday night.

I've concluded that on cw, we are essentially activity-limited, so a modest station like mine can still do about 75% of the best score in the country, whereas

on phone, it's more important, at least from the West Coast, simply to have a big signal. In support of this hypothesis, I offer the following statistics comparing the average scores of the top ten reported entrants in '96, and top ten claimed high scores in '97 in each category.

	1996 CW	1996 PH	1997 CW	1997 PH
High Power Score	212.5k	325.3k	229.4k	327.2k
Low Power Score	181.9k	219.3k	179.1k	207.4k
(percentage of high power score)	(86%)	(67%)	(78%)	(63%)
QRP Score	95.8k	63.8k	115.7k	101.2k
	(45%)	(20%)	(50%)	(31%)

As you can see, there's much more of a premium in the phone SS on being high power. Presumably, this equates directly to signal strength. Part of this, I suspect, has to do with the sunspots, especially for West Coast stations. In the East, SS is mainly an 80m and 40m contest, while for us the high bands are more important. When 10 is usable, and 20 stays open later into the evening, then it's much easier for an average West Coast station to do better on phone, since we don't have to do battle on 40 and 80. While many East Coasters and Midwesterners seem to be able to make 1500 or 1600 qso's or more using dipoles on 40/80, such a result seems to be virtually impossible from the West Coast without really good antennas. Obviously they have a bottomless pit of locals to work on those bands, and we don't. K8DX, for example, posted a score with some 1100 q's on 80m!

But don't despair — SS Phone will get easier and more fun when conditions start to improve again. As an example, I compared my 1992 log with my 1997 log on phone. In 1992, I made 1234 q's in about 21 hours with poorer antennas for 40/80 than now, while in 1997 the total was 1206 in the full 24 hours. In 1992, I made about 500 q's the first day and 700 the second (including staying on 20 right up to the end of the contest,) and didn't bother much with 40 and 80 at night, while this year I made 700 the first day, including many agonizing evening hours on the low bands, and only 500 the second day. In '92, the 10m qso total was 389; this year it was zero. The moral for all us mere mortals, is ... wait 'til next year (or the year after!) Here's a pome about the poor 6-lander in SS phone

"Lament of the Phonically Challenged W6"

Sweepstakes on code was just great,
But phone found him in the wrong state.

He yelled himself hoarse,
But on 40, of course,
He just couldn't keep up the rate!

CQP/CQPWIN Program notes

As always, I enjoyed using my homebrew logging software. Some other club members also used it, and it was gratifying to have several guys in other parts of the country mention that they were also. Anyone who has ideas for improvements for next year, or found bugs, please let me know so I can keep improving it.

The ability to use it as a voice keyer is certainly helpful on phone, both to save your voice and to make it a bit less depressing when calling cq repeatedly into a quiet band on Sunday. For example, if you are cq'ing on Sunday and your rate is at 40 per hour, and if each exchange takes, say, 20 seconds, then you are cq'ing for about 2800 seconds, or about 47 minutes. Since SS cq's are very short, typically under 5 seconds, and you may listen for about 2 seconds for an answer before you cq again to keep the frequency, then you would be sending about 400 cq's in that wretched hour. Without a voice keyer, that's a recipe for frustration and despair!

The Windows version has a new feature this year that I found very useful. I call it InstaMatch and I guess it's something like "super check partial" in CT. It involves loading previous logs into the program to form a database of callsigns. As you type in a call, the matching callsigns from the current log and the former-log database are instantly and separately displayed. This is very helpful when you can't quite make out, for example, the last letter of a callsign, as it allows you to make an intelligent guess. For next year, I'm going to revise it so that it stores check and section for SS, and multiplier for CQP, so that after you enter a call, if it was worked in previous years, the check and section, or CQP multiplier, will be displayed. They might change from year to year, but it will give you a guide. Thus, if you miss someone's section, it's much better to say "was that Georgia?" rather than to simply ask for a repeat.

November meeting

Elsewhere there is a full meeting report by W0YK. We had a lively and spirited discussion on SS strategy, along with some analysis of our CW results, and rate sheets of some other stations that had been reported on the 3830 reflector. Tom, N6BT, then gave a fascinating recount of the secret vertical antenna tests that, by the time you read this, the gang at 6Y4A should have been able to parlay into a multi-multi CQ WW CW winning effort. I may sound like a broken record, but I want to repeat that we are having entertaining and interesting meetings this year. We routinely get an attendance of 30-35 people. Why not make the effort and be part of the fun?

Thanks and 73, Andy.

SS PHONE, YUKON STYLE

VY1JA. The call holds a mystique to Sweepstakes testers. I don't know if there is an equivalent in any other contest, where a single QSO with a particular station means so much to achieving a contesting goal. I have 9 Sweepstakes Mugs, and in checking, J. has given me 7. I have worked him 37 times through 1996.

And, though very much in the middle of nowhere, J., VY1JA, through the wonders of modern technology, was able to offer the use of his station, have 20 testers take him up on the offer, and, in my 1st email pileup, I got through first. I got through first mostly because I had been checking my email a few times a day to see CW Sweepstakes scores. I was looking for Dan, AD6DO's score, as we were both competing for the SCCC W6UQF Memorial Trophy, awarded to the club member with the highest combined low power Sweepstakes score, in memory of Charlie, a low power Sweepstakes stalwart. Dan, just 17, beat me by 39 QSO's. I got a few emails from SCCC guys asking me "What are you going to do about that kid?" When I saw J.'s email, I thought, "What an opportunity! This is what I'll do with that kid." The W6UQF competition isn't limited to 175 miles. I checked with the XYL who said, "Go for it."

When I emailed J. my interest, and he responded that I was first, but the aurora could flare up and conditions would be poor if that happened. He said with an aurora I would hear signals that would be S9, and they wouldn't hear me. If I changed my mind, he'd check with the next person on the list, who had already made reservations. I asked J. if I could do a single op low power. J. said if I came up I could operate QRP all thirty hours if I wanted to. I corresponded with Bruce, N6NT, who had visited J. for Phone Sweepstakes two years ago, see NCJ, March/April, 1996, page 20. Bruce said the same thing about aurora and told me I would do better from home.

Undaunted, I told Bruce I was going, and inquired as to what might make an appropriate gift for J. He mentioned that J. had a small black and white monitor in the shack, and no DVP. I had a 15" color monitor with a dead computer in the closet. When I was pulling the VGA card, I realized there was a sound blaster card in there also. I had been thinking I didn't want to do a phone contest without a DVP, and as soon as I saw the sound blaster card, I knew an inexpensive solution was at hand. I ordered Contest Sound Blaster. It turned out I had about 80% of the parts needed for the interface in the junk box. Trips to Radio Shack and MARVAC Dow, a great old style electronics parts place, filled in the rest. In addition,

Larry, K6RO, offered me an 80% assembled interface to take along, and Bill, N6WS, sent me a spare K1EA DVP with cables.

I checked the internet and found flights from LAX to Whitehorse via Vancouver. It was an American/Canadian flight so I could use frequent flyer miles for the ticket. It would have been about \$750 without the miles. When I called to make the reservations for the miles, it turned out I couldn't go the Thursday before the contest. In fact, only business class seats were available for Wednesday.

Since I was using miles, I decided to go Wednesday, returning Monday. The day before I left, J. emailed me telling me his keyboard died and to go shopping for one for him as they were much less expensive in LA. I was able to shop in the closet again. Never has a dead computer yielded so many benefits so quickly.

Getting to Whitehorse was easy. The cab picked me up at 6am and I met J. at the airport at 3:30pm. The first stop on the sightseeing tour was the burned out building housing J.'s office at the power company. The fire took out about 30% of capacity. J. is a manager in charge of getting the capacity back on line, a project the contractors estimate will take two months. J. has been working very long hours recently and will continue to do so until the project is finished. He thought the estimate was optimistic, but J. still plans on getting on some for the CW CQWW.

Next on the tour, I check into my hotel in downtown Whitehorse, about 25 minutes drive from J.'s place. J. had offered me the use of his shack for the whole time, but since I would be in Whitehorse five nights, I didn't want to impose myself longer than necessary on J. and his family. J. also told me the shack was rather rustic, with a wood burning stove and bed, but no bathroom or other amenities.

Leaving the hotel, J. said he wanted to get something to eat. He started to pull into a Chinese place, but then decided to go to the Burger King. He opens the door, sees a woman and says "Well, hi there, pretty lady." Now, I had only known J. an hour by then, but he just didn't strike me as the flirtatious type. It took about 30 seconds more for me to realize the lady was J.'s wife, Ann. Whitehorse is a small, but cosmopolitan town, with 20,000 people of the 30,000 in Yukon. Still, for them to be so in sync as to walk in the same restaurant at the same time without a prior plan struck me. But they have been married since they were seventeen and have five sons aged thirty-four to fourteen. The two youngest boys, Jeb, 14 and Blaine, 16, still live at home.

Ann is a corrections officer at the local prison, and works odd hours. She was going on a three day midnight to eight shift when we met.

On the way out to J.'s shack, the conversation came around to how J. got into contesting. It turns out in the early 90's, after a QSO and ragchew, Charlie, W6UQF, had written to J. and asked him to get on for CQP and Sweepstakes. They corresponded and spoke about contesting and what it meant to the guys to have Yukon on the air. As a result, J. got hooked. Then I got to tell J. about wanting to get my name on the W6UQF Memorial Trophy.

Once at J.'s shack, a 16' X 12' building about 150 yards behind his house, we hooked up the monitor and keyboard, put in the DVP and... a keyboard error message, push F1 to continue came up. We pushed F1 and, no more problem. I loaded the DVPTSR and NA and recorded a message on the DVP. It played back but cut off after 4 seconds. We put in a RAMDISK, and took everything else out of the computer. Problem gone. NA worked with the radio (except that both the band map and scratchpad wouldn't come up, and never did.)

However, the computer and monitor generated birdies were terrible. It turned out J. had just put his motherboard in a new case. It took a while for J. to change back into the old case.

Meanwhile, I threw ferrite at all the cables and made an aluminum foil shield for the monitor. J. turned on the computer back in the old case, and nothing happened. It turned out the bottom of the motherboard was shorted to the case. It had happened before to J. with that machine, so it was quickly fixed. There were still alot of computer and monitor birdies, but I decided I would just have to work around them. It was almost 10pm and J. still had to drive me back to the hotel and then go back home.

I ought to note here that J.'s antenna farm consists of a four element quad at 70' for ten, fifteen and twenty meters. He has a vertical for forty meters that also works on eighty meters and a low rhombic for 40m.

My plan was to rent a car Thursday morning and get to J.'s around 1pm local time. I would cover the sunrise and morning period Friday. I had the radio turned on from 5pm to 10pm with J., and there wasn't much happening, although we didn't try hard to make QSO's. On the way out the door, J. pointed to the Northern sky, which though completely overcast, shone brighter than the Southern sky. J. uttered the dreaded word, "Aurora." He said the high bands would probably be good the next day.

After J. dropped me off, I was hungry. The Chinese place J. almost went to was six blocks from

the hotel and open 24 hours. As I said, Whitehorse is cosmopolitan. It is also cold.... It hit -14°C (a little above 0°F) at night and didn't quite make 0°C, (32°F) during the day. Everyone told me this is very mild for this time of year. It hit -40°C last year.

The Westmark Hotel was very acceptable at \$89 a night (the whole trip including hotel, food, rental car, gifts for the XYL and kids and entertainment ran \$720, since the airfare was free.) The Westmark sported a good location, large rooms, cable TV, gift shop, restaurant and bar. It is somewhat thin-walled. The first morning I woke up to what sounded like a telephone conversation in the next room. Through the window curtains, I could see it was pitch black outside. I thought, "Who is on the phone so loud in the middle of the night?" I looked at my watch. It was 7:45. Sunrise is almost 9am. I was able to join a gym two blocks from the hotel for the three days I was in town. There are two multi screen movie theaters in town, and I had a choice of four first run movies I hadn't yet seen in LA. I saw Mad City Thursday night. Friday night, after J. and Ann had to cancel our dinner plans due to exhaustion, I went to the restaurant J. had suggested as the best in town. I had the best crab I've ever tasted. There are plenty of stores in town, many non-touristy places with the essentials. The hardware store and business supply store had everything you would find in LA. There were two large supermarkets in town that had everything you would find in LA. There were cars and people on the streets at all times of day and night. Whitehorse; cosmopolitan, and cold.

Thursday at about 1pm local (2100 UTC) after stoking the fire and letting the shack warm up, I signed as VY1JA for the first time. Fifteen was open to large parts of the country. As the afternoon moved on fifteen petered out and twenty was open to all over the country. As it got dark, about 4:30 pm local (0030 UTC) twenty died and nothing was heard on forty. I made about thirty QSO's all told, semi-ragchewing style.

I got up early and started the shack warming at 7am Friday. I worked nothing and heard little before the sun came up. I only made two QSO's all morning. I came back late in the afternoon to spend some time with J. The bands were still crummy. One thing I wanted to do was record the contest. I had brought an old VHS video camera for recording the contest. I tested it at home with my 950 using the phone patch out to the video camera's microphone input.

But J.'s 850 didn't have a phone patch out, or any other 600 ohm output. A query to the reflector provided the suggestion from Jim, N6IG, that we use an audio transformer on a splitter from the headphone

jack. We headed to another outbuilding on the property, a big barn with nothing inside except a small refrigerator that J. later moved to the shack, and a big box of PC boards. J. picked up a couple of boards with likely looking audio transformers. It turned out the first one he hooked up worked. J. is a resourceful ham.

The Saturday morning of the contest, I checked out of the hotel and arrived at VY1JA about 11am. J. already had the fire going. J. had just gotten a file in that had been reconstructed from one of the fire damaged servers at work. He had to work, would join me for the start of the contest, but then had to go teach Tae Kwon Do. He and Ann are double and triple blackbelts, respectively.

I started warming up a frequency for the contest. Since you've read this far, you deserve to learn the secrets of working VY1JA.

J. has his favorite frequencies. My favorite frequencies have always been ones where I have a good run going and little QRM. J. likes frequencies that end in 7. This being a phone contest, he told me I should operate 3777, 3837, 7177, 7227, 14177, 14227, 14237 and 21337. I thought, "I'll operate anywhere I find a hole," but out of respect for J. I started at 14227. This secret is good for CW also. J. CQ's at 3527, 7027, 14027 and 21027.

Twenty meters was open to the midwest and south. I didn't have any problems working one station after another. On fifteen meters I didn't hear a peep, checking at 2030 and 2045. So I told guys who came by on 14227 to come back when the contest started. With a minute to go, I called roll. Jeff, N5TJ was #1 (but isn't he always.) The first time the last 10 rate meter came off 0 it went right to 186. I put 4 Qs in the log in the 2102 minute. Roll call was over. The pileup was relatively small. The 2105 minute ended with 15 in the log. Then the propagation switch got turned off. I didn't make another Q for 4 minutes. I made one and then didn't make another for 12 minutes. I was dying. At 2130 I tried fifteen meters. I made 1 QSO! I heard some 6's working the east and midwest, but I didn't hear anything else.

I went back to twenty meters and wound up the first hour with 35 QSOs. Miserable. Just after the first hour I tried fifteen meters again. I worked two buddies, Arnie, N6HC and Dave, K6LL, who both were doing pretty well. I, on the other hand, couldn't be heard by anyone I heard on the band.

I went back to 14227 despite the QRM, because J. had asked VY1AU to look for me there Saturday afternoon. My second QSO after returning from the excursion to fifteen meters was VY1AU, or as J. calls

him, "Yukon Gold." I got a little run going again, but finished the hour with a 33 rate. The next hour was worse, at 24. I was reduced to S&P and not even getting through to 75% of the stations I called.

Finally, late in the 0000 hour, I got propagation to the south sitting on 14321 (not one of J.'s favorites, but I had a run and little QRM.) I must have been very weak even though I was spotted on packet at 0110, 'cause in the next hour I heard some chatter on frequency like, "Yeah, Joe, he's in there. He's on number 148 and his check is 60." The run ran its course, as did the band, and I moved to 7152 at 0130. The 01 hour finished with a 54 rate, far and away the best so far. I was on a roll!

At 0200 the lights went out, figuratively. I made 12 QSO's the whole hour, mostly S&P, all west coast, except VE8EV, who had me #5 and then emailed J. it was the worst conditions he had ever seen for Sweepstakes. It got worse. Here is my entire log from 0250 - 0631:

0250 VE8EV

0332 AI6V

0455 W6NL

0525 W7VJ

0631 N7PP

While CT counts much of that time as time off, in fact I was calling guys over and over and over on eighty and forty meters. They were S9+ but they didn't hear VY1JA calling and calling and calling. I did take two legitimate 1/2 hour breaks during that period. I was SO depressed I walked over to J.'s house. He looked outside and pointed out the aurora, still hidden by a complete cloud cover. While he didn't put it in these words, his message was, "Welcome to the Yukon." He consoled me by reminding me the high bands should be good the next day. He told me to get on at 0700 and work as long as I could, then get up at 6am local (1300 UTC) and look for an opening on twenty meters. He said if it wasn't there, go back to sleep till sunrise. I put in a call to my XYL, Heidi.

I trudged back out to the shack. It was bad. I couldn't make a QSO. Nobody could hear me. For 0300, 0400, 0500 I had an astounding rate of one, yup, 1, uno! And a was killing my voice yelling VY1JA at 59+ guys, not alligators, but victims of aurora. If only they had known they were being called by VY1JA in the Sweepstakes. J. told me he has spend as much as 45 minutes calling one station because he knew the operator to be a serious contester and J. wanted to be sure he got a sweep. J. is serious when he says he contests mostly to help other testers. Things improved only slightly, as the next three hours produced rates of 12, 18 and 7.

I turned off the radio and went to sleep, setting my watch alarm for 5:30am local (1330 UTC.) I woke up fifteen minutes before the alarm was set to go off. I got on twenty meters, made a quick QSO, then nothing. I tried forty meters. Nothing. Back to twenty meters. Then came a nice little run on the east coast sunrise peak. I worked a bunch of 2's, my first of the contest. Just after 1400, the opening closes. At 1500 I try again, nothing. At 1530 I try again, nothing. The 1600 hour is good for 8 QSO's. At 1711 the band opens, about fifteen minutes after sunrise. I'm on 14227. The pileup builds. At 1733, the last 10 rate meter hits 178. Then the rate starts to slow. Too many fills. Guys are still calling when I come back to the next station and QRMing me. For the first time in my life, I decided to work split. I told the pileup I was going to work split and to hold on while I found a listening frequency. I spun the dial up and it sounded fairly quiet at 14232. I set the other VFO and announced "VY1JA, listening 14232." The VOX cut off and the pileup was just as big.

I had to check the radio to make sure I was listening on the right frequency, as I was surprised so many guys could go split to the correct frequency so quickly. I got the rate back up to the 140's. The 1700 hour generated 100 QSOs and I got my contest best hour (109) at 1800. The last 100 meter peaked at 128.

Even with AGC off and riding the RF gain, at times the pileup sounded like mud. At 1823 my listening frequency got QRM'd and I went back to simplex for the rest of the contest.

Things slowed somewhat, QRM got worse, fifteen meters had north/south propagation only and I had worked all the 6's and 7's I was hearing the night before. The 1900 hour's rate was 76, but then I got squeezed off of 14227 and in the 2000 hour the rate dropped to 40. I then plied 14337 and later 14187 for rates of 66 in the 2100 hour and 62 in the 2200 hour. I slipped into 14228 (close enough to 14227) at 2215. I stuck thereabouts a long time making 102 QSO's in the 2300 hour, including having KP3L call in for the sweep at 2317, three minutes before J. came back in the shack. J. had been in and out all day Sunday. He missed the working split hour, but was in for some high rate periods. I was highly complimented when J. told me he learned some techniques to try out to get his rate higher.

Speaking of the sweep, when I went to sleep early Sunday morning, I didn't think it would happen. But I was down to only needing five mults when NE called in at 1900. A VE1 called in shortly thereafter. Needing just NL, PR and SC (SC?) I changed my CQ message to "looking for ..." At 2050 someone came

on frequency and said, "VO1MP is on 14195." I went down there and called a number of times. Finally, someone said "VY1JA is calling you." I think it was George, W2VJN, who also might have been the one who told me where VO1MP was. At 2134 KB4GYT called in from SC. That left PR. I changed the CQ message to "CQ Puerto Rico, this is the Yukon, VY1JA." And then KP3L called. A few minutes later another station told me KP4 was on down the band, but having already bagged one, I kept running. I told J. I'd send him the sweep cup, but he said the one he wants is the one he earns himself. He'll do it too.

To finish up the contest I made 78 Q's in the 0000 hour. AT 0016 the last 10 meter hit a contest high 204. At 0130 twenty meters died and I was pretty much done. The 0100 hour was good for only 42 QSO's. I made 14 QSO's in the 0200 hour, but the last one was at 0222. I was back to no one hearing me on forty meters, and there was no one on twenty meters left to work. I finished up at 962 and a sweep, probably good for the VY1/VE8 low power record. Even with good conditions I wouldn't have beaten AD6DO. What am I going to do about that kid? I guess I have to hope he goes away to college soon.

J. had to head up north early Monday morning. Yes, there is still a north from that far north. So we said our goodbyes after listening for 3830 for a while. I had the wood stove down pat by Sunday night and slept in 'til 8am. I had overheated it Saturday night and awoke sweating in a 90°F room. Maybe that's why I didn't need my watch alarm to wake up early. It was easy Monday morning to drive the rental car back, catch an 11:15am flight to Vancouver and get back to my house by 6:45pm.

Overall, Sunday made up for the miserable Saturday. I got quite a kick from all the clean sweep excitement I generated, including a few who said I gave them their first ever sweep. I enjoyed the experience of operating split. I was pleased to make a sweep. I enjoyed meeting J. and spending some time with him and his family. His boys are really into Internet gaming and I learned about it from them.

My respect and admiration for J. has increased considerably. The patience and determination it takes to operate in such an RF-unfriendly environment is substantial. Would I do it again? Let's put it this way, I had my chance to be VY1JA for a sweepstakes weekend. I will cherish the experience, but I'll let the other 19 guys who wanted to go have a chance. I might add that while J. was very down in the dumps regarding contesting after CW Sweepstakes, he was much more upbeat during my visit. J. has an offer that will take care of his linear tube problem about

which he is very excited. He has plans to put the rhombic higher and fix some tower sections. He recently received a promotion that he expects will keep him in the Yukon. He will be building the CVB interface and have a DVP available.

Here's the bottom line: we will be hearing VY1JA with J. at the mic in contesting seasons to come.

73. Ken, K6LA

CG AIDS CQP EFFORT

On Friday Oct 3, 1997 for the tenth year, Dave Sailor, N6KG, and I, left our berth at Redwood City just before sunrise, heading for our CQP spot in San Pablo Bay at the four county intersection. My sailboat, the "Miss Dee" made good time and we made it to the junction of Contra Costa, Marin, Solano, and Sonoma counties at around 2 PM. We set up the antennas, generator, rig and gas tank in very good time as the waves were only 2-3 feet and the wind was about 20 Kts. We then settled down to a leisurely dinner and an early bed time so we could start operating as early as possible. The wind whistling in the rigging kept me awake most of the night, and the seas began to build to 3-4 foot waves. We got up at sunrise, had a good breakfast, and started contesting.

The contest was going very well and the only interruption was to fill the generator's gas tank occasionally. Conditions were fair and we seemed to be getting out OK. We worked a lot of DX. We sacked out around 10:30 PM, and had a good night's sleep. We woke up to a sea as smooth as glass and it stayed that way throughout the rest of the contest. We took down the antennas and stowed all the gear. It was so nice we decided to relax and leave for home in the morning.

Mistake #1! Around 2 AM the wind started screaming through the rigging and the seas were building to 7-8 feet. I estimated the wind speed to be better than 60 knots. We got up early and decided to get the heck out of there!

Mistake #2! We should have stayed put to ride out the storm. I anchor the boat with two anchors to keep the bow into the wind and to offset the reversing tide. We managed with some difficulty to pull the stern anchor and Dave began to work on the bow anchor. Poor Dave! As the boat pitched fore and aft about 20 feet, he was weightless on the downward cycle and had to hold on for dear life, while on the up cycle he was held against the deck, all the time trying to pull the anchor free. I was at the engine controls trying to make things easier when the anchor suddenly popped off the bottom and in one of the boat pitches, became tangled in the propeller shaft and jammed the rudder. (*Been there, done that! ... ed*) We were helpless and at the mercy of

the storm, and soaking wet. I did manage to reset the stern anchor to keep us from drifting.

I called the Coast Guard with the boat radio and asked for a commercial tow. The Coast Guard Station in Carquinez answered and said that they would rather come out themselves. I gave them our position and a description of the boat. We only had to wait about twenty minutes and here they came in their forty foot cutter. Two young "coasties" were able to get aboard the boat and tried to help us unfoul our rudder so we could at least sail the boat. They also had no luck, so they put a 300 foot tow line on the bow and began the tow to Vallejo Municipal Marina. Fortunately the rudder was locked amidships, so we didn't yaw all over the sea as we were towed. My boat has never gone that fast before! I guess the Cutter's 640 horsepower had something to do with the speed. The boat was actually planing! I can't thank the Coast Guard enough for our rescue! We spent the night at the Marina and we were able to hire a diver to untangle the rudder and prop early Tuesday morning. It only took him about five minutes, and he handed me my anchor and said "Take off". Needless to say, we didn't need much encouragement. We had just cleared the Marina and were under the Carquinez bridge when the engine quit. We put up the sails and began the tedious task of tacking across San Pablo Bay. Late in the afternoon near the San Rafael bridge, I was able to get the engine restarted. It seems that all that tossing around had shaken some sediment and water in the fuel and plugged the Diesel injectors. The engine is only a two cylinder, 16 horsepower Diesel. With the sails up and the engine running, we made good time.

Crossing under the Bay Bridge at 5 PM, the wind was getting stronger by the minute and the seas were building again, so we took down the sails before the boat shipped too much water. We ran out of food at lunch time and were very hungry when we docked at my berth in Redwood City at 10:15 PM.

All in all, CQP was great, but I NOT the trip home! It's remarkable, but no one got seasick!

73 and will try again next year, Stan, K6MO

MUNS' MEETING MINUTES

The November meeting was held at Hewlett-Packard's corporate headquarters in Palo Alto on Page Mill Road. This was another first-time location and it worked out well. "Give Pizza Chance" provided a great assortment thanks to Rusty, W6OAT. Drinks were brought in by Ed, W0YK, and the 35 attendees cleaned everything out ... but, no one went hungry or thirsty.

We were pleased to induct four new members were into the club; Eric, K6EP, from Santa Cruz operates 95% phone and enjoys Field Day and CQP expeditions. Steve, WB6MZQ, has reappeared (being a past president of NCCC) and also operates mostly phone. Don, AA6W, operates mostly CW and is also a reinstated member, having been our Rookie-of-the-Year in 1978. Finally, Darryl, AF7O, traveled farthest (from Sandy, Utah) to join us from his temporary Bay Area QTH in Alameda. We now have 180 members.

Since this meeting was right in between the two Sweepstakes weekends, everyone reported on how they did, or didn't, on the CW weekend and their plans for the upcoming Phone weekend. Lies, excuses and bragging were in great supply and fun was had by all. We made a special effort to remind and chide everyone about the pledges they had made back in September! VP/CC Bob, N6TV, kept copious notes and concluded that we still had a good chance at winning the Unlimited Club Gavel if everyone put in a strong effort on Phone.

Prez Andy, AE6Y, led a discussion of rate, band-changing and off-time analysis from several rate sheets he had collected from club members operating the CW weekend. At this point in the sunspot cycle, 10 meters was almost useless, with some stations making less than 5% of their QSOs there. As expected 15, 20 and 40 were the big rate bands with 80 providing the opportunity to snag those close in sections. Although there was some variance between stations, the aggregate of West Coast stations had about equal QSOs on each of the 3 main bands. Of the stations studied, 57-64% of their QSOs were made on Saturday. Most everyone took time off from 1 - 7 am local time, Sunday morning.

Voice synthesizers, or at least CQ recordings, are very helpful in reducing fatigue. We were reminded that our equipment has plenty of amplification, so yelling into the microphone only damages one's vocal cords! Everyone was reminded to consult the NCCC 1997 Sweepstakes Handbook for pointers and reference material. Andy handed out several copies to new members and others who didn't already have a copy.

Tom, N6BT, gave a slide presentation on the upcoming 6Y4A antenna plans for the CQWW CW weekend at the end of November. It is basically an all vertical kit that fits into 4 fiberglass golf club cases and weighs less than 250lbs! And that's not the most impressive fact ...get a load of the antenna inventory:

- 160 m. vertical
- 2 80 meter verticals
- 4 40 meter ZR magnetic verticals
- 6 20 meter verticals
- 4 15 meter verticals, 3 element yagi
- 4 10 meter verticals, 3 element yagi

miscellaneous wire for auxiliary antennas

Extensive testing was done during the ARRL CW Contest in February 1997 and during the summer at the salt flats on the Bay edge. Many different configurations of verticals were set up and meticulously measured with the help of Bob, K6XX, 17 miles away at 800 feet using a calibrated scope. In general, it was best to have the verticals right at the edge of the salt water, although some interesting and, as yet unexplained, results were obtained with the verticals placed an odd multiple of a quarter wavelength from the salt water edge. Typically, two radials are used and are elevated several feet above ground. The 10 person team at 6Y4A plans on experimenting with parasitic vertical arrays plus some phasing of parasitic pairs. They leave a week early to try different setups before settling on the contest antenna farm. Be sure and look for them the week of the 24th to give them signal reports and then work them during the contest. If last February is any indication, they will be loud. We expect a record performance, or at least a winning score.

Next month's meeting is replaced by our annual holiday banquet, being held this year at Chef Wang's in Los Altos. See details elsewhere in this issue. January's meeting is planned for the South Beach Yacht Club in San Francisco at Pier 40 just south of the Bay Bridge. See our web page for a detailed map. We have tentatively planned a joint meeting with the Northern California DX Club in February.

73, W0YK

A CQP TALE

The California QSO Party has got to be one of the all-time favorite contests for George Williams (N6NKT) and me. Although we have done better in the past (1991 was our most productive year point-wise), this year we had a special highlight.

We have been using the Henry Coe State Park as our operating site over the last seven years. This year we learned that the park ranger Barry Breckling (KF6JID) and his wife Judy (KF6JIC) had recently become hams. Don Mason, a volunteer at the park, inspired them to get their tickets. Himself a new ham, Don (KF6BKJ) stopped by our site on the suggestion of Ranger Breckling. Although he had never operated HF before, he overcame his mike fright to try his hand at a contest contact. Putting out a tentative CQ, someone came back to Don S9 - 8P6CV from Barbados! Once it sunk in that he not only made a contact, but that his first contest QSO was DX, we had one stoked ham on our hands! A couple of days later I spoke to Ranger Breckling. He said that Don was still out of control.

Don WW6Z

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