



Publication of the
Northern California
Contest Club



June
2004
Issue 385

NCCC Net
Thursday 9PM
3853+/-

Next NCCC Meeting

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

SS Lessons Learned

Buffet dinner at **N6ZFO**, catered by the **Latin Fire Grill**:

- Peruvian Rice Chicken
- Sea Bass and Vegetables
- Latin Caesar Salad
- Drinks (provided by N6DE, N6ZFO, N6RO and others --volunteer if you wish to bring drinks to share).

Cost: **\$15.00**, drinks included. RSVP req'd to n6zfo@arrl.net

Date: Monday, 14 June, 2004

Time: 6:00 pm schmooz & eat, 7:15 pm NCCC meeting & program

Location: N6ZFO, 11 Portola Way, Corte Madera, CA 94925 (415) 924-8847

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Two Tango

Tom Berson, ND2T

As I write this during the week before WPX CW the club is abuzz with preparatory activity. Some members are rushing to get antennas in the air. Others are polishing their aluminum and greasing their feedlines. Still others are programming and practicing their exchanges. A few farsighted members have already left on contest DXpeditions. Are these DXpeditioners lucky? Well, yes. But they also planned ahead.

How long before a contest do *you* begin to get ready? We all know of hams who never get ready, who first pay attention to a contest about an hour after it starts (or maybe not until after it ends). From what I can see, most NCCC members give themselves between two and seven days of prep time. And this seems adequate preparation to play, but not to win. Winners start planning and preparing and practicing and perfecting much earlier.

This year NCCC will again win the Sweepstakes Gavel. That's our Number One External Goal. And to win the gavel against a not-so-complaisant-as-last-year competition we are going to start preparing way in advance. Our June meeting theme is "Sweepstakes Lessons Learned." The idea is to review what happened in the 2003 SS: the good; the bad; and the truly ugly. We will mine that experience for nuggets of wisdom that we can share and use to improve our performance in the 2004 SS.

There are a few things I did right in 2003 SS, but many things I wish I had done differently. To the extent that I can understand, document and remember what those things are they will become lessons learned for me, and maybe for others. So, to prepare for the June meeting, I am reviewing my 2003 SS logs – all four of them – and reliving the contest (yikes!). I invite you to do the same, and please bring to the meeting a few notes about the lessons you learned.

We will be coming back to Sweepstakes at least two more times before the 2004 event.

So much for our external goal. Recall that our internal goals are:

1. Improve members' stations
2. Enhance members' operating skills
3. Encourage teamwork

To support these goals we are running the NCCC MVP Competition. MVP stands for Member Visit Program. MVP is a contest which starts on 1 June. Please see the announcement elsewhere in this JUG. Rules and log forms are in the members' area of the NCCC web site. KB.

VP/CC Report

Dean Wood, N6DE

NCCC Wins RTTY Roundup!

Congratulations to the NCCC for winning the inaugural ARRL RTTY Roundup club competition by a wide margin over PVRC! I don't think I have ever seen a contest sponsor give as much credit to the NCCC for winning a club competition and contributing to the overall success of a contest as WS7I gave us in his ARRL web report. Read the article at:

<http://www.arrl.org/members-only/contests/results/2004/RTTY/>

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the NCCC victory in the RTTY Roundup!

Thursday Night NCCC Contest and Net

Don't forget to check into the weekly Thursday night NCCC net on 3853 kHz at 04Z (9pm PDT). We have discussed a lot of great topics on the net in the last few weeks. If you're an NCCC member who is unable to attend our Monday meetings, or too far away from the Bay Area to travel to a meeting, this is a great opportunity to still be a part of the club and catch up on club events!

Typically 15 minutes before the net, on 40m-160m, we will hold a practice contest just for fun! If it's the Thursday before a major contest (SS, WPX, NAQP, Sprint, RTTY RU, etc), we will hold the practice contest using that contest's rules and exchange in order to prepare for the real thing that weekend. If there isn't a major contest that weekend, we will hold the NCCC Sprint Practice Contest, also known as the "NS" contest. Thanks to N6ZFO and N6RO, we have a set of rules that have been posted to the NCCC reflector.

We encourage you to participate in the NCCC practice contest and net every Thursday evening! Look for an announcement on the NCCC reflector each week to find out which contest format, mode of operation, and bands that we'll be using for that week's practice contest.

Recognition

After contest results are officially posted, I would like to publicly recognize a few exceptional efforts by NCCC members. I wish I could recognize everyone, but unfortunately I cannot, so I apologize in advance whenever I inadvertently miss your outstanding effort.

This month I'll focus on many of the impressive NCCC Sweepstakes achievements.

SS CW:

The following stations made the overall Top 10 in their category:

Unlimited (out of 177 entries) – N6RO (#2), W0YK (#5), K6RIM (#9)
Multi-op (out of 53 entries) – W6YX (#8), W7RN (#9)

Other great achievements in SS CW:
Out of 219 entries, N6TV and N6BV (@K6TA) placed in the Top 15 overall in the most competitive class of Single-op HP (Bob was #11 overall; Dean was #15 overall).
K6OY was the top Single-op LP station in the Pacific Division.

SS SSB:

The following stations made the overall Top 10 in their category:

Unlimited (out of 230 entries) – WX5S @W7RN (#7), W0YK (#10)

Multi-op (out of 175 entries) – W6XK (#10)
QRP (out of 81 entries) – WR6WR (N6WR op) #10

N6BV (@N6RO) placed #14 overall in the competitive Single-op HP class out of 274 entries.

SS Honorary Mention:

W1SRD placed #11 overall in the Unlimited class in both SS CW and SSB!
Props to VA7RR for traveling to NCCC territory to join in two successful Multi-op efforts, and to W2SC for his Top 25 SO HP score in SS SSB, despite his busy work travel, wife in a car accident, and preparation for CQWW CW.

SS Error Rates:

Log checking in SS is thorough, yet there were many impressive error rates by NCCC members.

Looking at combined mode error rates, N7MH had the best in the club, participating as an HMO both weekends with terrific error rates (~1%, sub 1%) in all four efforts! N6XI was close behind Mike among HMOs

with excellent accuracy. K6EP and K6UM also did a great job both weekends.

W6CT, KD6WW, W6RGG, W6EU, and N6TV showed outstanding accuracy on CW, as did WX6V, W6ZZZ, AI6YL (+WA6VEF), K6IF (+W6LD), and AK6DV on SSB.

There were many other sub 3% error rates by NCCC members. Great job!

NCCC MVP Competition

WHEREAS: NCCC's three inner goals for this year are

- improve member stations
- enhance operating skills
- build teamwork.

AND WHEREAS: We know from experience that whenever we visit someone's shack we come away with ideas for our own station. Also usually with some operating tips. And certainly with a better understanding of the visited ham's achievements and capabilities.

NOW THEREFORE WE CREATE: The NCCC MVP Competition. MVP stands for Member Visit Program. It's a contest just for NCCC members.

EXCHANGE: NCCC members visit other NCCC members' shacks. Both the visitor and the visatee must be present in the shack simultaneously. Each must sign the other's MVP log.

ELIGIBILITY: Participants, both visitor and visatee, must be Members or Associate Members of NCCC at the time of the visit.

SCORING: The visitor gets one point per visit. The visatee gets one point per visitor. Multi-ops count. So do antenna parties. So do casual one-on-one visits.

DX MULTIPLIER: Visitors and visitees receive a per-QSO DX multiplier. The multiplier is the integer portion of the logarithm of the short-path great-circle distance, in miles, between the club center and the visited shack. For example, visits to shacks located from 100 to 999 miles from the club center are worth two points to the visitor and two points to the visitee.

DUPES: Duplicate visits are NOT allowed. However, (A visits B) is not a dupe with (B visits A).

CLUB STATIONS: Although club stations (e.g. W6YX) are not "members of NCCC," a visit by a member to a club station is worth one point to the visitor provided that another NCCC member is also present and confirms the visit in the visitor's log.

MOBILE STATIONS: Moving a mobile station, even to a different county, does not make it a different shack.

DATES: Visits must take place between 0000 on 1 June 2004 until 2359 on 31 January 2005.

AWARDS: Handsome MVP Certificates will be awarded to all members scoring ten points soon after they submit a log showing ten points. Stickers will be awarded for every additional ten points on the same basis. A trophy for the top score will be awarded at the NCCC Award Banquet.

LOG CHECKING: It's mostly the honor system. Imaginary visits will incur a penalty of five points. Obvious prevaricators will be disqualified. Flagrant violators will be Wouff Hong'ed.

LOGS: All logs must be on paper, using the official NCCC MVP Competition log form, downloadable from the web. Submit logs to the contest manager, ND2T

By post: ND2T, 764 Forest Ave,
Palo Alto CA 94301
By fax: +1 650 324 0120

By email (scanned .PDFs only):
nd2t at anagram dot com

W6YX – A Bay Area Contest Training Ground

Rob Brownstein, K6RB

Just look at the results of practically any major contest and you're likely to find W6YX listed with a noteworthy score. And, why not? After all, W6YX is the Stanford University Amateur Radio Station. The name "Stanford" evokes images of sophisticated equipment, advanced antennas, and money's-no-object facilities. Well, if that's the image you have in your mind you need to get rid of it right now. It ain't like that.

To get to the station, you either go west on Page Mill Road from El Camino Real or east on Page Mill Road from highway 280. When you get to Foothill Blvd, you turn north and keep your eyes peeled for a driveway on the left hand side of the road a little ways up. The driveway leads to a security gate, and to some beautiful, pastoral, meadows and hills. You follow the road up and eventually get to a cable-locked gate that guards the road leading to the station.



This is the commanding view looking east with East Bay hills in the back.

As you're coming up that road, you see some towers and yagis, and you know you're getting close. The station is housed in a squat, white, rectangular building that could easily double for a military outpost. But it has only been in that building for less than ten years. Prior to that, it was in a mobile, trailer-like facility that could double for a mobile military communications vehicle.

Inside, there's a hint of chalky scent mixed with a twinge of mildew. This isn't The Harvard Club. As you walk in you spot a few tables with some equipment on them, but this isn't the station. The main operating area is actually to your left. And, like N6RO's station rather than K6RIM's, the priority is focused on quick reconfiguration rather than aesthetics. After all, one weekend the station may be heavily involved in an international SSB contest, then the next week, in a RTTY contest. To avoid confusion, and inadvertent RFI quirks, the station is reconfigured to avoid superfluous connections and cables.



Here is the main operating position with two FT-1000 MPs, amps on top shelf, and switching matrix on right rear.

Two NCCC members that have been instrumental in W6YX's success as a contest station, and as a training ground for "newbies", are John Fore (W6LD) and Mike Heideman (N7MH). Mike has been active at the station since his undergraduate days in the 1970s, and John "found" the station in the late 1980s. Back in the 70s, says Mike, "they had some really nice Collins

equipment and stacked six-element, Telrex monobanders for 10, 15 and 20." But by the 1980s, the S-Line gear was getting a bit long in the tooth. By 1989, they had an Icom IC-761, an Alpha 78 amplifier, plus the S-Line, a 30S-1 amplifier and a KWM 380.

Nowadays, the primary station features a pair of FT-1000 MPs and a network of computers for controlling operation and simplifying multiplier spotting and hand offs. In addition, there are two amplifiers, an Alpha 87-A and an Acom 2000, plus switching relays and controls that allow operators to quickly navigate among the various antennas.



W6YX has several monobanders including this five-element 20-meter yagi.

These various antennas are an interesting group, too. On one 60-foot tower, there's a six-element 10-meter and four-element 40-meter yagi. On another 60-foot tower, operators can choose a six-element 15-meter, or six-element 20-meter yagi.

There's also a Force 12 C31-XR plus five-element monoband yagis for 20-, 15-, and 10-meters. In case you think they lack sufficient high-end HF aluminum, don't forget the Pro-67. The low-end of HF also is covered. There are inverted V's for 80 and 160, and a Force 12 Sigma-80 vertical dipole. That Sigma-80 fell over just a few weeks after I visited the station, but Mike informs me that it is now joined by three others, and the four will be turned into an 80-meter four-square this summer.



What looks like a rotatable dipole is actually a Sigma-80 vertical dipole with one of its large T-bars visible at the top.

Deciding which contests to play in is often an impromptu affair. "By and large," says John, "the decision is made a few days before a contest." That's when software and hardware configurations are done, hence, the need for quick reconfiguration capability. Sometimes there are enough operators committed to where a full-bore effort can be done with no one being unduly stressed.

But, in many cases, such as the recent WPX phone contest, "there were huge gaps," John lamented.

One area in which W6YX has been an inspiration to other NCCers is RTTY contesting. Dean Wood, N6DE, and Mark Aaker, K6UFO, have both been active in setting up and helping to oversee big RTTY efforts. Other members, such as K6ENT, have also cut their contesting teeth in that squat, white, building atop the gently rolling hills of Stanford.

Like N6RO, W6YX is a continuing work in progress. The members and "associates" have lots of plans for work inside and outside the "shack." There are few mid-peninsula locations where hams can exercise their freedom-of-antenna choice. The growing antenna farm and lack of RFI-plagued neighbors are a big part of the attraction for locals such as John and Mike. But another key factor is the team spirit that pervades the goings on at W6YX during the heat of battle. Is there room for one more in this year's Field Day? W6YX qualifies as a category "F" station, and did I mention the air conditioning?

Improving Your Scores With Cabrillo Log Analysis

Marc Ziegler, W6ZZZ

To really get a handle on what worked and what didn't, it's helpful to see your results from several perspectives.

Cabrillo Based Statistics (CBS) is a PC program written by K5KA that will analyze a Cabrillo log and give you various statistics. The exact output depends on the data/multipliers logged for that particular contest.

- QSO rate summary by hour and by band
- Number of unique call signs

- Best rates for an hour, half hour, 10 minutes and 1 minute
- Multiplier summary (broken down by band if applicable)
- For ARRL Sweepstakes things like checks, call areas worked and precedents.

CBS supports the following eight contest types in both CW and SSB (but not RTTY).

- ARRL 10 Meter
- ARRL 160 Meter (a CW only contest)
- ARRL International DX
- ARRL November Sweepstakes
- CQWW 160 Meter
- CQWW DX
- NA Sprint
- NAQP

When you run the CBS program it prompts you for an input filename (your Cabrillo log) and an output file name. The program is available at:

<http://www.kkn.net/~k5tr/software/Cbs.exe>

Member News

W6NV, KX7M, N6KJ, and AD6E help wrestle Oli's new crank-up tower up the steep slope to replace the one blown down during one of our winter storms.



Rick, N6XI, just finished building his diminutive Elecraft KX-1. He says he'll be "Kbing from his hotel room with it during WPX CW." He's also trying to slave his SteppIR antenna so that as he changes frequency, the amplifier is blocked from emitting RF while the elements are changing length. Says Rick, "I'm skeptical about it."

Rob, K6RB, finally put up a radio 2 antenna in time for WPX CW. He expects to be fully SO2R during the contest using his two FT-1000s, the usual C31-XR and MAG 240N plus the new Hy-Gain AV-640 vertical mounted to his chimney at 35 ft. Says Rob, "I'm surprised how well the vertical is working. My first QSO was with YV on 40 CW."

Fred, K6DGW, sent in a URL for keeping up with BPL goings on. He says it is a lot more usable than trying to work your way through the FCC comments page. The URL is www.foothill.net/~andrea. Says Fred, "Click on the BPL icon on the opening page, and you're there. There are links to several other sites, each with their own links."



Dean, N6BV, shows us the SS gavel presented to NCCC by the ARRL at Visalia. (photo K6TA)

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