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Contest Club



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NCCC Net
Thursday 8 PM
3610+/-

Program

"Wire Antennas for Limited Space", K9YC

Date: Monday, 9 February 2009

Time: 6pm schmooz, 6:30pm dinner, 7pm program

Location: Holder's Country Inn, 998 South De Anza Blvd., San Jose CA 95129 408-244-2798

Dinner choice:

- Fresh Salmon
- Chicken Cordon Bleu
- Sirloin Tips & Noodles
- Vegetarian Lasagna

Inclusive of fresh vegetables, rice, salad/Italian dressing, and coffee/tea/soda. Beer and wine available for purchase. Total price with tax and tip is \$23 for all selections. RSVP to [K6EU](#) by Friday, 6 February.

NCCC Officers

President: [John Miller, K6MM](#)

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

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Zero Beat

By John Miller, K6MM

As we begin this new contesting year, there are a few thoughts I'd like to share with you. NCCC functions primarily to promote the radiosport of contesting, to engage in competitive contesting as a group, and as an outstanding fellowship organization.

We have a 38-year history of promoting contesting in amateur radio. The story is carefully outlined on our website by co-founder Jim Neiger (N6TJ).

Continuing this rich history is our biggest challenge, since there are fewer folks coming into this hobby than when most of us began many years ago. We have to work hard to make sure our hobby and sport continue to thrive.

From a competitive standpoint, NCCC is recognized throughout the contest community as one of the top tier clubs in the United States. Although our main focus for the past few years has been on maintaining the top spot in ARRL Sweepstakes, we have also put forth strong efforts in other contests, such as ARRL RTTY Roundup, CQWW, NAQP, and NA Sprint where we have been very competitive. We should take the same sense of pride in these contests as we do for SS.

The social aspect of our organization is notable. We average close to 60 attendees at each monthly meeting. NCCC is also a very

“caring and sharing” organization – populated with some of the most experienced and knowledgeable amateur radio operators in the world.

Our current roster boasts over 620 members. However, fully 20% of these members have been with the club less than one year. We’ve done a great job of recruitment, now we need to follow through with the next phase of getting more folks engaged in contesting.

A cornerstone of the Vision 2008-2009 plan this year was to help improve operator and station capability through better training and support. We made significant progress toward that goal through K9YC's Field Volunteer Program and various sub-committees. However, we can do even more, using one-on-one and WebEx online training sessions to help build contesting confidence and competence for both new and existing members.

The upcoming months offer a busy contest schedule. Some of the bigger events include the CQWW RTTY, CQWW WPX, ARRL DX, NAQP, and North American Sprints. These are all great skill-building contests. I hope you’ll be able to take some time to get on the air and make some noise. Let’s continue to make this another memorable year for NCCC!

ARRL RTTY Roundup

What a great event for the Club – and a great way to start the 2009 Contesting Year! In December, we announced a “call-to-action” plan to ask at least 51 NCCC members to submit their logs so NCCC could qualify in the Unlimited Club Competition for this contest. As of January 20, two weeks before the log submission deadline, NCCC had submitted 81 logs – a fantastic turnout!

The secret to this successful event was “teamwork.” Since many members operated in RTTY mode for the first time, they needed training on setting up their stations, understanding how to interface their radio to

computers, tips on using RTTY software macros, etc. NCCC club members rose to the occasion and assisted with one-on-one meetings, phone calls, and two WebEx webinars.

This contest was a great example of how “KB Energy” can be concentrated to put the club in a highly competitive position – and have much fun in the process! Congratulations to all those who participated in the 2009 ARRL RTTY Roundup.

January Meeting Highlights

More than 60 members attended the joint meeting between the Redwood Empire DX Association (REDXA) and NCCC on January 14.



It was held at Mr. Magoo’s Italian Family Style Restaurant - great food. The program was devoted to the Elecraft K3, a groundbreaking radio that has found its way onto so many hams’ wish lists.

The popularity of this radio is pretty amazing. At least 60 NCCC members have purchased a K3 during the last year and several of our “heavy hitter” contesters are already sporting pairs of K3s in SO2R configurations. After dinner, the results of a K3 owner’s survey were presented by K6MM, followed by W0YK’s “Demystifying K3 Filters” overview.

A seven-member K3 panel (K6CTA, K6XX, N6DE, N6BV, N6TV, W0YK, and W6SX) then fielded questions from the audience.

Elecraft principals Wayne (N6KR) and Eric (WA6HHQ) attended the meeting to receive feedback and clarify issues. PowerPoint presentations from the meeting can be found on the NCCC website.



The K3 program was well received -- but the real “bonus benefit” of this type of joint meeting is the opportunity to connect face-to-face with ham radio colleagues from another club. We all had a good time.

Contest Academy

This year for the first time at the International DX Convention (IDXCon) in Visalia, NCCC is sponsoring a Contesting seminar, which we've chosen to name: “Contest Academy.”

Inspired by a strong growing interest in Contesting at IDXCon, NCCC will provide what we hope will be a valuable learning experience for attendees. Our primary goal is to cover the basics of Contesting, drawing from NCCC's 38-year reputation as a recognized participant and leader in amateur radio Contesting.

We have selected program topics, which hopefully will be of interest to all participants, and will be presented by some of NCCC's most experienced contesters.

Contest Academy will be held on Friday, April 17, 2009 from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. The cost is \$10, which includes a Contest Resource Kit.

You can read more about CA on the IDXCon website here:

http://dxconvention.org/?page_id=204

NCCC is honored to be selected to provide this first contesting seminar as part of the 2009 IDXCon program. If successful, we hope

that this topic and NCCC will become an integral part of future IDXCon conventions, to help bring DXing and Contesting closer together.

Summary

That's it for this month. I'll see you in the next contest!

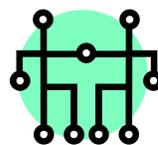
73, John K6MM

February Meeting

By John, K6MM

<http://www.nccc.cc/meetings.html>

Check the website for details of our next meeting, Monday, February 9, 2009 at Holder's Country Inn (Cupertino). Main speaker: Jim Brown (K9YC) -- "Wire Antennas for Limited Space".



Welcome Aboard!

Let's all welcome these new members who were voted in at the January meeting:

1. **N6JV** – Norm Wilson - Sacramento
 2. **W6ONV** – Stephen Toumi - Oakley
 3. **W6TCP** – Ian Parker – Pleasanton
-

Contests For February 2009

By John K6MM

There are some great contesting opportunities this month -- RTTY, CW, SSB, 160M, Sprint, -- take your pick. For a one-page summary of all major contests throughout the year, go to:

<http://www.nccc.cc> and click on “Major Contest Calendar” at the top of the page.

For a complete 12-Month Contest Calendar go to:

<http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/contestcal.html>

To download ARRL's Contest Corral, go to: <http://www.arrl.org/contests/#corral> and click on January.

- Vermont QSO Party Feb 7-Feb 8
 - 10-10 Int. Winter Contest, SSB Feb 7-Feb 8
 - Minnesota QSO Party Feb 7
 - AGCW Straight Key Party Feb 7
 - Delaware QSO Party Feb 7-Feb 9
 - Mexico RTTY International Contest Feb 7-Feb 8
 - North American Sprint, CW Feb 8
 - AGCW Semi-Automatic Key Evening Feb 11
 - CQ WW RTTY WPX Contest Feb 14-Feb 15
 - SARL Field Day Contest Feb 14-Feb 15
 - Asia-Pacific Spring Sprint, CW Feb 14
 - Dutch PACC Contest Feb 14-Feb 15
 - FISTS Winter Sprint Feb 14
 - North American Sprint, SSB Feb 15
 - Run for the Bacon QRP Contest Feb 16
 - ARRL Inter. DX Contest, CW Feb 21-Feb 22
 - REF Contest, SSB Feb 21-Feb 22
 - UBA DX Contest, CW Feb 21-Feb 22
 - High Speed Club CW Contest Feb 22
 - CQ 160-Meter Contest, SSB Feb 27-Mar 1
 - North American QSO Party, RTTY Feb 28-Mar 1
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Sharing Our Stations

Jim Brown, K9YC

In his Zero Beat column this month, K6MM talked about our club teamwork. Teamwork takes many forms – everything from help with antennas, RFI, logging software, and rig hookups to mentoring, joint operating, and the sharing of stations. One of our spring meetings will be devoted to the last of those last items – how can we set up our stations to host or mentor a guest operator?

For most contests, we can host or mentor a guest op simply by offering the operating chair and running through how everything operates. Some of us have everything

automated – everything from antenna tuning and switching to auto-tuning and band-switching of our power amp(s). All the guest has to do is tune the radio and operate!

My station is one of those with almost nothing automated. That's partly for reasons of cost and the time to implement it, but it's also because my station is always in a state of upgrade and expansion.

Every year or so, I find myself upgrading the switching and limited automation that I put together the previous year. Nearly always the changes are to accommodate a new rig or take advantage of its new features.

Two years ago it was the additional antenna tuners I acquired (I'm up to five at the operating desk) so that I could switch between tuned antennas on each band. Last season it was the band decoders, band-pass filters, and second operating position (with second power amp) to support SO2R, and the computer interfacing to go with it. The next project will be switching for receive antennas for the K3's diversity capability.

N6RO's multi-op is also in a continuous state of development (and maintenance). Often Ken and other members of the team spend a day or two before each contest reconfiguring it so that when a guest op sits down each of his five operating positions is already to go, and all of those changes are invisible to the operator! Ken's most recent upgrade is a transition from DOS logging on old iron to Windows-based logging on good quality recycled laptops.

Whatever the setup of our station, we need to look at it as a newcomer would see it. How much attention is needed to tuning antennas and amplifiers? What is the signal flow of antenna switching? A great start for this is a block diagram.

I do most of my drawing in Autocad, but I've also done some pretty good drawings in Power Point, and even Word has some

drawing tools. The key to making it work is to make the blocks small enough that everything fits on a page, and make the labeling simple so that the lettering can be big enough to read.

Don't fill half the page with big labels – I do large drawings for very complex sound systems using only three sizes of type. Nearly all of the type is the smallest that can be read, small titles are 25% larger, and titles are 25% larger and bold.

When you choose labels, try to avoid model numbers for equipment and antennas, and use functional descriptors instead. The model number of that tribander may mean something to you, but not to your guest. Call it “20-10 beam.” For example, two of my antenna tuners are 20-10 E/W and 20-10 JA.

The second element of helpful documentation is a page of settings that need attention for each new operating condition, such as switch settings, tuning of the amp and antenna(s) for each band. It's a quick “cheat sheet” for band changes.

The third important element of documentation is the keystrokes for your logging software. It's even better if you have to go back to the manual to find it. We'll likely learn something useful about its features in the process.

Sharing a station for a split-site Sweepstakes operation is very different. Here the intent is for the guest operator to make more points for the club by splitting his operating time between two stations and call signs.

Hopefully, you'll be on the air with your rig for at least part of the time that he isn't there, so the guest must use a different rig. That can be complicated (or even unworkable) in a station that's strongly automated.

The ideal for a split-site operation is for the operator to bring everything, set it up on a portable table next to your rig, and connect

to your antennas. I've done this quite successfully at N6IJ, N6EM, and N6RZ.

I first meet the host at the station a week or so in advance and we figure out how I should set up so as not to disturb his setup (or XYL). Then I return the Friday before SS, set up my gear, feed the antennas and write down the settings of my antenna tuner(s) and power amp. It's like a mini-Field Day, but inside and warm with no bugs and varmints.

To share your station for this kind of operation, the most important preparation is labeling of any cables that need to be unplugged, with notes of exactly how they get reconnected when everything is over.

Most of the time, you can simply move the cable that connects your power amp to the main antenna switch to the guest's power amp. You'll also need to make sure that your 240V outlet mate with the plug on the guest's power amp. For one of my guest operations I needed to buy two connectors and build a cable adapter.

Sharing and working together on projects is one of my greatest pleasures in ham radio, and NCCC offers many opportunities. Almost every time I'm involved in any form of it, I gain something from the experience. It may be new ideas, or it may begin or nurture a new friendship.

73,
Jim K9YC

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