

JUG

Publication of the Northern California Contest Club

March 2002

Issue 358

The NCCC 75 meter net
meets on Thursdays at
9PM,
3830 approximately

NCCC Meeting

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

Annual Awards Dinner

Come celebrate the accomplishments of NCCers!
This year, we plan a slide presentation to
augment the awards.

Monday, 11 March 2002

Tied House Cafe & Brewery

Dinner will be a robust buffet, Tied House style! \$25
6:00pm socializing, 6:30pm dinner, 7:00pm Program
954 Villa Street, Mountain View, CA 94041 (650) 965-2739

RSVP to W0YK by Sunday, 10 March

Andy's Dandies

WPX is the TEST!

Remember, we decided back at the June 2001 meeting to go all out to win the 2002 WPX as a major club event. At that meeting we also decided to go all out to win SS – the Club put in a terrific effort, breaking the old SS record in the process, but didn't quite win due to the immense effort made by SMC

Well, we've got another chance in WPX. In 1992, we set a club record of 97,500,000 points! Unfortunately, the Finns more than doubled that last year in an all-out effort, but hopefully they will be so busy with WRTC preparations, that they'll cool off a bit this time. The club score is, like SS, the aggregate of the SSB and CW weekends.

I'm going to be using the opportunity to go on my first serious Contest Expeditions, to ZF2NT for WPX SSB and to P49V for WPX CW. My personal goal is to at least double (and hopefully more) my best combined totals in the two contests from my home station of 6.5M points. Barring major equipment failures, hurricanes, or total brain fade, it should be possible.

continued next page

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Contest Calendar

March Contests

ARRL Inter. DX Contest, Phone	Mar 2 - 3
RSGB Commonwealth Contest, CW	Mar 9 - 10
North American Sprint, RTTY	Mar 10
UBA Spring Contest, CW	Mar 10
BARTG Spring RTTY Contest	Mar 16 - 18
Russian DX Contest	Mar 16 - 17
Wisconsin QSO Party	Mar 10
Alaska QSO Party	Mar 16 - 17
Virginia QSO Party	Mar 16 - 18
CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB	Mar 30 - 31

April Contest

SP DX Contest	Apr 6 - 7
EA RTTY Contest	Apr 6 - 7
Missouri QSO Party	Apr 6 - 7
JIDX HF CW Contest	Apr 12 - 14
YU DX Contest	Apr 20 - 21
Michigan QSO Party	Apr 20 - 21
Helvetia Contest	Apr 27 - 28
Florida QSO Party	Apr 27 - 28

May Contests

CQ WW WPX Contest, CW	May 25 - 26
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At that June meeting, we had in attendance probably more world, U.S.A., and Category winners from past WPX contests than have probably ever sat together in one room, including such stalwarts as AI6V, K2KW, K6AW, N6KT, N6RO, W6NL, W6OAT, W6RGG, and many others (please, no offense intended to anyone accidentally left off the list). Some of these guys could probably win WPX practically by themselves, but we were all there to talk strategy and brainstorm ideas about how to have the good ole NCCC come out on top in the 2002 WPX contest.

I want to reiterate now some of the principles that were decided upon at that meeting. Here's what we collectively thought would be necessary to win WPX this year.

- 1) Put on a major effort from good stations in California. Good scores can be achieved from California. Carl, AI6V, volunteered to be the US station coordinator.
- 2) Where appropriate, go up a category, regardless of where that puts you in the standings for that category. For example, in WPX, single ops can work only 36 hours, but multis can go the full 48 hours. Even with one transmitter, if you can get someone else (who would not otherwise be contributing a score) to share the load, entering multi-single will allow your station to be used 48 hours, with fresher operators, and resulting higher score. Similarly, if a station has the capability to have two transmitters on simultaneously, consider a multi-multi operation, even though it's not competitive against larger multi-multi setups. There was a general consensus that spotting nets aren't helpful in WPX due to high error rate in the spots (and the general availability of multis anyway).
- 3) Use rare prefixes. Either borrow someone's 2x1 callsign, or get a special assignment from the FCC. My understanding of portable ops is that you can choose any valid prefix. If you are at a modest station, then choose an interesting portable identifier, like W7ABC/KQ6 (though a stronger station might actually have a higher rate with a simple prefix, as K6LL/7 seems to have every year)
- 4) Go all out in SSB. If you can devote only one weekend to WPX, there are many more points to be had in the SSB contest at the end of March

than in the CW version at the end of May. For example, using 2000 published results, the median SOAB HP score worldwide was 10M in SSB and 6M in CW (for the U.S.A., it was 8M versus 4M). For multi-multi's the difference was even more striking: the median of the top 5 M/M's worldwide was 43M on SSB and 14M on CW.

- 5) Maximize efforts from overseas contest stations owned by club members, such as HC8N, P49V, ZF2NT and others.
- 6) Encourage members to go on special expeditions for the contest. A major contribution to the club score has to come from ad hoc expeditions. There are lots of QTH's now available. See K2KW's web site www.dxholiday.com for details. And, as mentioned above, more information will be posted on the Members section of the club web site.

The Fun of WPX

Over and above the club effort, WPX is a great contest to enter for a number of reasons:

- a) West Coasters can do very well, unlike the DX contests.
- b) Everyone works everyone, so there's a great feeling of camaraderie and egalitarianism absent in most other contests.
- c) There's lots of activity, and no substitute if you are a prefix hunter, as lots of weird new prefixes show up each year.
- d) There are many state QSO parties in March to get you warmed up (see contest listing)
- e) You can turn off packet for the weekend (if you use packet in WPX, you're Multi-single)
- f) The exchange is easy, just a report and serial number;
- g) Because the multipliers count only once, there is no need to worry about moving multis from band to band. Furthermore, a lonely garden variety DK3 station is just as valuable as 3V8BB with the huge pileup on him
- h) Even if you have an antenna for only one or two bands, it's possible to turn in a high score – a determined 10 or 15 meter effort can score about as well as an all band attempt, particularly on phone. And don't forget there is a specific entry class for stations with a tribander and wire antennas; and, finally,
- g) NCCC NEEDS YOU!!!

XI-ting Times

March, 2002

February Fracas

The February meeting at TIBCO Software worked out very well. Kitty Hevener WB8TDQ related some of the high points of her torch-carrying experience and thanked the club for the generosity of the members who, at the January meeting, had dug deep to help her purchase her Olympic torch. Visitor Andy Chesnokov UA3AB brought greetings from the contesters of Russia. N6BV had an interesting rate-running recording and W6CF played a rousing contesting song to get us in the mood. Bob N6TV announced a pending group purchase of RFI-killing toroids – stand-by for more info via the reflector. Jeffrey WA6KBL provided some tantalizing insights into microwave contesting with a report on his activities in the ARRL 10GHz and Up event. VP/CC Andy AE6Y updated us on plans and possibilities for the CQ WPX contests coming in March and May. Ken N6RO distributed more certificates recognizing those who worked W1AW/6 in the IARU. ...and more!

Secretary/Treasurer Ed W0YK introduced and we discussed a proposed Bylaws amendment to our membership procedures. Since then, Ed has published on the reflector the statutory notice and the voting is now under way. Please vote!

Panelists N6ZFO, W6CF, N6BV, N6TV, W6OAT and W6RGG presented their views on The Future of Contesting and the membership, over 50 of us in attendance, provided provocative counterpoint. We covered a lot of ground and I can't do it justice in this brief report, but here are some highlights: ZFO Bill analyzed demographic data to conclude that if we do nothing to change the *status quo*, our numbers are likely to decline about 20% over the next 15 years. Your prez relayed concerns of a recent new member that our club may tend toward elitism at the expense of nurturing the new contesters we will need to reverse that downward trend. We agreed that we want better contest reporting, at least in QST, and noted with satisfaction that there has been some pretty good coverage in NCJ (read only by insiders) and even an occasional mention in mass media. Jim encouraged the silver quills in attendance to start writing! We mourned the demise of CQ Contest and Radiosporting and agreed that an independent group represent-

As has been discussed in previous columns, there are many ways to participate in WPX to help out the club. Possibilities for club members range from established superstations that we hope will come out in WPX, like HC8N, run by N5KO, W6NL, K6AW and N6KT, to bring-the-gear-and-put-up-the-antennas expeditions, like the 6Y exploits of Team Vertical, led by K2KW and N6BT. In between are wonderful places like ZF2NT's Little Cayman paradise, P49V (AI6V), and lots of QTHs for rent, such as the WP2Z hilltop station in the Virgin Islands (a haunt of N6DE) or the Villa Rose (used by AJ6V among others), and the 8P5 venue of W2SC, and NH7A's and AD6E's Hawaiian.

Also possible are expeditions within the U.S. and Canada to established sites. Particularly on the East Coast, a WPX expedition can give us Left Coasters the ability to feast on endless European pile-ups – the kind we used to see with JA's.

And don't forget the fun of simply operating your own station from home. Unlike CQWW and ARRL DX, in WPX the multiplier structure allows one to make a most credible score from home in California or Nevada, particularly if you have, or can borrow, an interesting prefix for the occasion. Great scores have been turned in from W6GO (N6IG), W6NL, NR6O (N6RO and company), WC6H, W6YX. Even from a more or less average station like my own, 3M points per weekend is readily achievable. And many other stations of club members have greater potential than that, e.g., K6IDX, K6KM, K6ZM, K6TA, N6TV, K6RIM, W6OAT, and others (don't mean to slight anyone; the point is that lots of points can be scored locally just by putting in the effort).

GO TEAM!

See you all at the March festivities.

73, Andy, AE6Y

Who Wrote it?????

There were no correct guesses as to the author of the great pome so the mystery man, Jack W6ISQ and I will be enjoying that Steak and Lobster dinner I was going to donate to the winner!!!! Mary, NA6E

ing testers and contesting might be helpful to promote our sport and to do things that no individual contest sponsor can do alone. Everyone loves WRTC even though few get to compete. There has been sporadic progress toward individual performance measurement and there is much room for leadership here.

We all need to know how to counter anti-contesting arguments and Part 97's Basis and Purpose is a good place to start – We certainly provide a strong venue for operator training and the promotion of international good will. Whether that is enough to counterbalance those who believe that all amateur radio public service should be conducted from handheld radios remains to be seen! We certainly need better marketing for our sport and the current controversy over QST page allocations may well lead to better coverage even if the score tabulations are relegated to the Internet. It was a stimulating discussion and got us all thinking in new directions about how to drive radiosport where we want it to go rather than sitting back and watching it go the other way.

One somber note – we voted in no new members. Hey, gang – how about we each take up the challenge to recruit actively for NCCC? Let's each introduce at least one newcomer to contesting and NCCC in the coming year ... naww, make that the next six months. And don't wait until June to get going! Bring a radio friend to the next meeting or invite him or her to your shack to play around in a contest. If every member recruited just one new member between now and August, and if only HALF those new members submitted scores in SS, then we could beat all comers in SS ... like we used to do before SMC discovered mega-recruiting. And do a lot to reverse the decline in the ranks of the Contesting Faithful, something K9PG's gang seems to be doing all by themselves!

Getting Out...There

Sure, I've been exhorting you all to plan contest expeditions. But did I have the moral right to do that? Did I speak from experience? Could I walk the talk? Well, I finally did it, albeit the easiest kind in which you visit an established station. Thanks to the gracious invitation of NCCCer Bruce N6NT/ZF2NT your prez set off on a contest expedition for the first time since 1983. That's right, friends, it has been nearly 19 years since I last left these shores in order to BE DX in a radio contest. Much too long ... but was it ever worth the wait to operate multi-single with Bruce in the

ARRL DX CW! No, we didn't win and I won't make excuses – AA4NC and K4MA out-did us from 8P9JA, cleaning our clock to the tune of 13 multipliers and about 30 Q's. But I was delighted to even come in second and the experience ranks right up there with N6XI/4X among my most thrilling contesting moments.

Bruce has built a dynamite Little Gun station on beautiful Little Cayman Island. And lest you dispute the "Little Gun" appellation, let me explain that ZF2NT consists of a Bencher Skyhawk tribander at 65', a 40m horizontal dipole at 50' and an 80/160 drooping dipole with its apex at 60'. It also includes a couple of rarely used verticals and a pair of life-saving little receive-only EWEs. Not at all a huge array of aluminum, copper and steel! But it plays like far more than it is and it gave me a thrill like I had all but forgotten about. I think I'm hooked...

The Poll

When new member Marc W6ZZZ suggested a poll to determine, among other things, how we all got into contesting, he unleashed a torrent of good thoughts, pleasant memories and fascinating biographical sketches. I am not surprised that we have so much in common, but I am delighted that there have been so many interesting variations on the theme. Hopefully Marc or someone else will assemble, filter and edit this material into a concise narrative on who we are and why we do what we do. Thanks, Marc!

Awards Banquet

Our next gathering is the annual Awards Banquet on March 11 at 6:00pm at the Mountain View Tied House. For directions and other info, see elsewhere in this issue and on the Web at <http://www.nccc.cc/meetings.html> . This has been a strong year for the club and many NCCers will receive recognition for their accomplishments. Come help thank the members who make the club what it is and lift a glass in honor of these hard working testers. This will be a premier opportunity to recap recent contests, plot future adventures and pump a few fists. If you haven't yet made it to a meeting at Tied House, know that the food and beer are outstanding. Be there!

73 & CU on the bands,

The Future of Contesting: Some Modest Predictions

by Bill Haddon, N6ZFO



The photograph below depicts a bunch of CW guys sitting around a camp. Maybe an ancient field day site? Notice the poles and wires in the upper right, with lines leading into the tent. Does this look familiar? Perhaps you will recognize a couple NCCC guys here - or maybe not. Actually, these folks were early telegraphers, and the CW in this case also stands for Civil War -- I ran across this photo while researching my great grandfather's participation in the battle of Shiloh in Tennessee in April, 1863. The photo is a reminder that Morse code has a rich and significant niche in America's history. Amateur radio operators are custodians of the Morse telegraphy history.



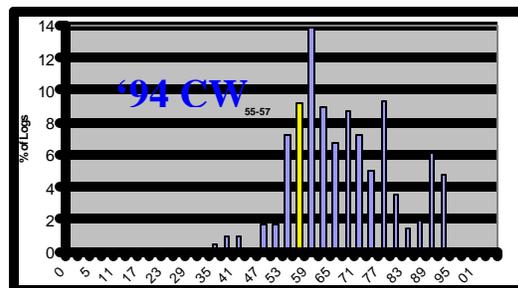
An Ancient Field Day Site?? Can you identify any Nccc'ers in this bunch? Some would say, in spite of our own fascination with the subjects, that both cw and contesting are becoming dinosauric relics. The recent proposals to banish full reporting of contesting results from QST aroused our uncomfortable feelings that contesting is, undeservedly, losing its base of support from ARRL. Believing that a close look at the numbers can be useful, I undertook this little exercise to attempt to predict the number and composition of contesting fifteen years, or more into the future.

The approach to making a prediction of contest participation in the future is a very simple one: the ARRL Sweepstakes, with its sometimes annoyingly complex exchange, provides conveniently available data for sorting the participants based on the year first licensed (YFL). When the YFL data are combined with: 1) date of birth numbers that are available for YFL up to 1996, 2) some demographics data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and 3) the change in YFL distributions for ARRL SS participants over the past ten or so years using N6ZFO logs, it's possible to devise a simple predictive model. The methods and data are described in more detail, but to entice you to read on, here are the results:

Summary of Conclusions

- Without intervention, in the year 2016, a sample of 700 contestants in the 2001 CW sweepstakes would decline in total number to about 575, or 18% thus reflecting an average yearly reduction of only 1.5% percent per year. Thus we shouldn't panic, but we need to be careful: while 1.5% per year sounds small, it's a deceptive number.
- Under a plan in which ten contest clubs nationwide add 4 cw additional contesting members per year above their current rate of addition, a relatively modest goal, the magnitude but not the sign of the decrease is reduced. For this case, again for the hypothetical 2001 sample of 700, there would be about 625 contesters in 2016 CW Sweepstakes, or a 10% decline overall. That represents just less than 1% per year.
- The predicted 1.5% annual average reduction is mostly due to fewer hams entering cw contesting, no real surprise, but the graphs of YFL tell the story dramatically (see below).
- There is also a reduction in new hams entering SS-Phone; it's less dramatic, but still indicative of a gradual but steady decline.
- For cw operators for a given YFL, the age distribution of the group is amazingly narrow for older hams: Over 80 percent of the cw participants first licensed in 1955-1957 received their first license in junior high or high school. In sharp contrast, those who listed their YFL as '94, '95 or '96, have a broad YFL distribution, with only a single entrant (!) first licensed below age 20.
- The current slow (1.8%/ year) decline is deceptive because it's not a linear function with time in the model, due to the increasing actuarial component of the changes. If we carry the "static" situation, i.e. no increase in recruiting, out 20-25 years, the decline is precipitous, and I suspect there would be a virtual end to cw contesting by 2025.

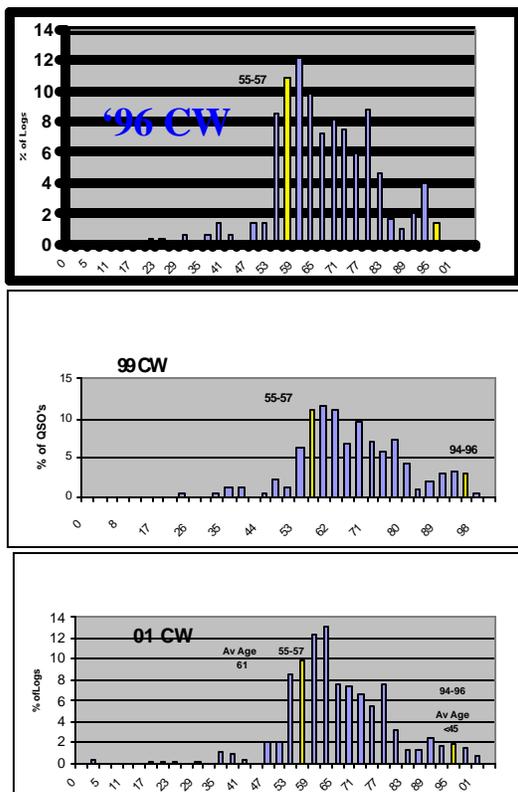
Details of the Predictions



The graph above shows the number of hams reporting a particular YFL in the 1994 Sweepstakes. Actually, each vertical bar represents a "binning" of three YFL years. The higher bars on the right hand side are the newly licensed hams giving contesting a try for the first time - about 11% were licensed in the six

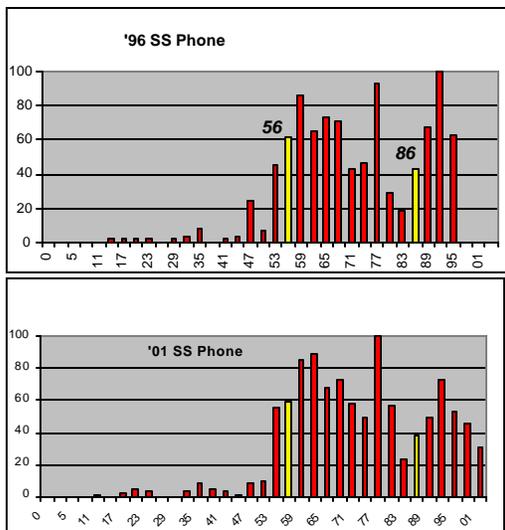
years previous to the contest. The dip as one goes backwards in time suggests that many lose interest after a while. Note the very low bar in the 40's - it's the WW-II period when no new licenses were issued. The 55,56 and 57 YFL groups are highlighted with a different color.

But look what happened to these curves in the later CW Sweepstakes:



The trends are clear: the right two bars, again representing hams licensed in the six years prior to the contest, declined to less than five percent of the total by 2001. But there was almost no change in the YFL's between 1951 and say 1978, roughly the middle "hump" in the graph. Here, the 55-57 and '94-'96 YFL groups are highlighted.

What's happening with phone sweepstakes? Lets look at similar plots for the years 1996 and 2001, again using data from the N6ZFO logs:



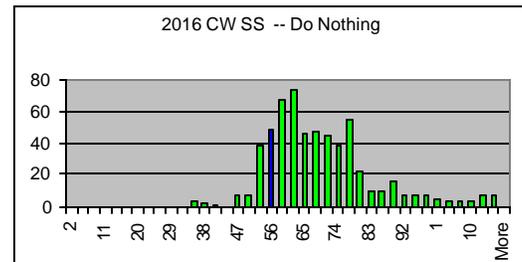
There's an important difference compared to the CW logs: the right hand bars, representing new contesters, comprise a bigger percentage of the group. But again, by the 2001 contest there was a decline in the relative size of this new group. So the trend is like CW, but less dramatic.

The Predictive Model.

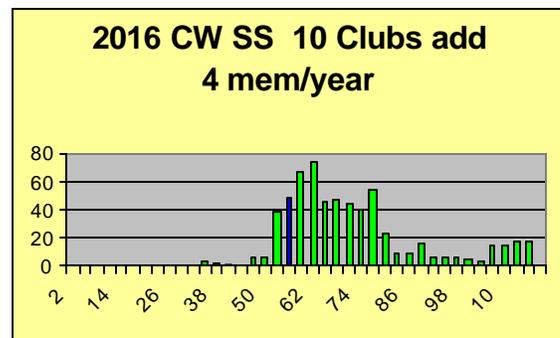
A prediction was made of what will happen to the participation in the ARRL sweepstakes in 15 years using the following rather simple assumptions:

- The number of hams entering the CW contest will decline by about 20 percent for each three-year increment, i.e. by about 6 percent per year.
- After 6 years of contesting for the new participants, half of them will lose interest, and half will catch the fire of contesting and stick with it for many years.
- For the older, established groups, mortality will be the reason for dropping out of contesting.
- Finally, the N6ZFO log of 700 QSO's for the 2001 contests represented about 1 in 4 of those who entered CW SS in a major way.

CASE 1. The exact assumptions above. The vertical represents the number of contesters in each 3-year bin fifteen years from now, in a hypothetical N6ZFO log. Note that there's a noticeable drop off in the most recently licensed hams in this theoretical contest, and that the effect of SK's is just beginning to be noticed on YFL groups prior to 1960.



CASE 2. Let's add the following recruiting option, namely that each of ten contest clubs increase their recruiting efforts to add 4 active contesters per year, i.e. 40 per year. Then with the assumption that N6ZFO works one in four of these new converts, the distribution looks like this:



This change brings the new contesters up considerably. Note that I've assumed all these new contesters were recently licensed hams, but the increases will be the same no matter what YFL distribution these newly licensed folks have.

Finally, we can compute the number of contesters in the hypothetical N6ZFO logs for these two cases compared to the 2001 basis year:

Behind each YFL bar in the graphs, there's an age distribution.

YEAR	Conditions	# of logs	change vs 2001
2001	Actual N6ZFO Log	700	--
2016	Assumptions listed above	577	-18 %
2016	Recruit 40 new contesters/year	628	-10 %

One of the interesting facts was that in for the YFL '55-'57 groups in the 2001 SS, about 80 percent of the participants were first licensed in their junior high and high school years. In contrast, for the later YFL groups the age distribution is broader. As noted above, the '94-'96 group had only a single member with a YFL of less than 20 years of age!

Some Closing Comments

Based on the above predictions here are a few random thoughts to chew on:

- While recruiting is good, and can slow the declines, it is probably unrealistic to think of traditional recruiting alone as more than a band-aid remedy.
- We need blue sky kinds of ideas. Maybe increased of radio sport promotion and historical emphasis of cw could have some role, but I'm guessing that some of you could think of additional ideas. We'd love to hear them!
- Perhaps there are some obvious changes. For example we are already hearing thoughts to reduce the maximum permitted hours for the big events such as ARRL SS and the DX contests. This change might benefit younger hams selectively by easing strains on the family. Perhaps a three-year pilot change should be carried out for one of the contests. Many just can't afford the brutal 20-30 hours on a single weekend. Especially in the coming years of declining sunspots, this seems a wise change to me and the effect on participation just might be exponential.
- As a group, we believe that radio contesting contributes far more on-the-air activity, operating proficiency and, importantly, equipment purchases, than surveys of support or mere numbers of participants reflect. But it's clear there are some real problems with participation and perception of contesting by others. The vague hope of this predictive exercise is that the information maybe open our creativity pores a bit to produce some novel approaches to reversing these situations.

Sources of data:

The Civil War photograph is from the collection housed at the US Army Military History Institute in Carlisle, PA. For an on-line catalog, see <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/>

For actuarial calculations, YFL was converted to age. This calculation was based on dob data for hams licensed in 1996 or before listed on www.jzap.com, and in some cases the bio's on [QRZ.com](http://www.qrz.com). Note: The dob information has been scratched from the current public FCC databases.

The actuarial projections are based on statistical data from: R. N. Anderson, United States Life Tables, 1997, National Vital Statistics Reports **47**, 28, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 13, 1999., Table 5, "Life Table for White Males, United States, 1997.

The contest data are from the N6ZFO Sweepstakes logs from 1994, 1996, 1999 and 2001.

Presented, in part, at the February 11, 2002 NCCC meeting in Palo Alto CA by Bill Haddon N6ZFO as part of the panel discussion "The Future of Contesting" organized by Rick Tavan, President, NCCC.

K5RC vs Mother Nature Before and After The Ice Storm



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