



Publication of the
Northern California
Contest Club



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NCCC Net
Thursday 9 PM
3853+/-

Our Next Meeting

Program

2005 - The 40th Running of the California QSO Party

Kevin Rowett, N6RCE & Mark Ziegler, W6ZZZ

August 8, 2005 – 6 PM schmooze, 6:30 PM dinner and
7 PM program

Holder's Country Inn, 998 S. De Anza Blvd., San Jose
CA

Dinner (choose one of):

- FISH: Grilled Salmon
- CHICKEN: Chicken Cordon Bleu
- BEEF: Tri-tips and noodles
- SALAD: Southwest Chicken Salad

All dinners include salad, vegetable, soft drink and
dessert! \$22 per person (incl. tax and tip). Please RSVP
your meal selection in advance to w0yk@msn.com by
Thursday, 4 August who will be collecting \$22 by PayPal
or at the door for those having dinner.

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Mike's Mic

Mike Heideman, N7MH

It's mid-summer and we've gone through a stretch without any NCCC focus contests. Many of us got on for Field Day with our local clubs, a few got on for IARU, and there have been a few other contests that small numbers of NCCCers have participated in over the past several weeks. My midsummer contest was NAQP RTTY at W6YX.

One bright light has been the ongoing NCCC Sprint contests organized by N6RO and N6ZFO with steadily increasing participation and scores. Congrats to Ken and Bill on their efforts in making NS such a success. The Fall NCJ Sprints are coming up soon so get in your NS practice and let's see if NCCC can put together some competitive teams for Sprint.

NAQP is one of our focus contests for the year and the CW weekend is almost upon us. The NAQPs offer a great opportunity to check out your antenna situation for SS. Everyone is low power (or QRP) so you should be able to compare how you're doing on each band relative to the other local stations and determine on what bands you may want to beef up your antennas. NAQP is also one of the best contests for practicing SO2R. The exchange typically takes the same time as a short CQ so it's easy to either dual-CQ or S&P on one radio while CQing on the other. Bob N6WG has been offering a series of NAQP hints on the email reflector that we can all learn from.

This October will be the 40th running of CQP. Kevin N6RCE and Marc W6ZZZ have put together a presentation for the August meeting celebrating this milestone and I encourage all to attend. I know that many of you have already made CQP plans for this year and hopefully the rest of us will get on the air and make this the biggest CQP ever.

Finally, I want to put in a plug for Sweepstakes. Begin making your plans now for those two weekends in November. We want to continue our winning streak and keep the gavel here.

VP/CC

Kurt Andress, K7NV

Ladies & Gentlemen, start your engines!

The NCCC contest season is underway.

Our guys fielded two teams and two Multi 2 entries in the NAQP RTTY Contest last month. The claimed scores on the 3830 reflector show the W6YX multi team in 1st place with the NN6NN team (@ W6XK) in 2nd place. WK6I operating SO (@N6RO) is shown in 4th place. GREAT JOB guys! Many thanks to Chuck, AK6DV, for organizing the RTTY teams.

Next weekend, Aug 6th - 7th is the NAQP CW. Bob, N6WG is organizing the teams for this contest. Please contact Bob, n6wg@comcast.net to sign up to be on one of the NCCC teams. Even if you can't put in a full effort your score can contribute to one of the team scores, but only if you are registered with a team. Let Bob know you will be on before Friday Aug 5th. DON'T FORGET to get on Thursday & Friday nights for the NCCC NAQP practice sessions. Look for the announcement on the Club reflector.

Aug. 20th – 21st is the NAQP SSB. Dan, K6IF is organizing the teams for this one. Contact Dan djl@andlev.com to sign up, or look for his post on the NCCC reflector.

The NAQP's are really fun and friendly contests with everyone trying to work you on as many bands as possible. The contest runs from 11 am PT Sat. to 11 PM Sat. night. Single-op entries operate 10 out of the 12 hours and must take breaks of at least 30 minutes.

Since this is summer, we will have very few hours for propagation on the low bands. So, it is usually best to take those breaks before the sun goes down and then operate straight through to the end. 160m is normally quite active in the last half hour.

Next month we have the CW & SSB Sprints, Team organizers will be announced.

The NCCC Sprints held the past seven Thursdays have been a great success! We keep finding new stations around the Country getting in there and having fun. We read lots of great comments from our contesting friends thanking the NCCC for putting on the events. Kudo's to N6ZFO and N6RO for making this happen every week. This is the best way to improve your Sprinting skills before the real thing.

The Contesting Clinic @ N6RO's during the IARU contest was a great success in my opinion. We had a good turnout and a great time. It was fun for me to meet many members for the first time in person. Dean, N6BV, did a demonstration of high-rate running and two radio operation, including dual vfo operation with one rig on SSB. Many of the guys got to sit down and run Dean's station. Dean made an audio tape for each one to take home and critique later.

N6RO, WA6O, and I provided demonstrations of each of our different styles of SO2R on CW. Afterwards, several guys sat down and gave it a try. It was lots of fun.

We had a terrific BBQ from Chef Matt, WX5S, in the afternoon and tasted some of Jeff's, WK6I, and Ken's wine.

Rick, K6VVA, brought all his cool video recording equipment and taped lots of real great stuff. Rick never got to operate a radio

but captured what looks to become a great contest training presentation when he edits and produces it later this year. Kudo's Rick!

Don, AA6W stayed up all night with Ken and me running the SO2R CW station. By the time the contest ended, Don was running JA's on one rig and picking up those Radio 2 qso's like a regular. So, the first NCCC clinic can claim its first graduate. KB!

Many thanks to Ken for being willing to blow off one of his favorite contests to host this event! We hope other opportunities will occur to do this again, maybe at another station that can host one.

IT'S CONTEST TIME! Get out there and have a great time putting up those points for the NCCC!

High-Rate Contest Operating

R. Dean Straw, N6BV

Notes from July 9, 2005, "SO2R Rate Clinic" at N6RO for NCCC during IARU contest.

Comments and Observations on SSB Techniques During Clinic

1. You must call CQ to do well in contests. Multipliers are also needed in most contests, so SO2R operation can give you the best of both worlds -- by letting you call CQ on one radio, while searching for multipliers (or QSOs, too) on the other.
2. Get the *complete* call, the first time. Go back to a partial call if that's all you get. For example, if all you hear is "G3X [noise, garbage, splatter]" then come back with: "G3X 59 06." If you suspect that a partial call is showing up in the Super Check Partial database you see on-screen, say the full call and let the other operator correct you. For example, you might say: "G3XTT 59 06" and he will correct you, with "No, it's G3XTA 59 27." [Some possibilities on why you can't get the call right the first time -- You're distracted using new software; you're distracted trying to correct typos as you enter the call; you're distracted due to noise/signals from second radio, etc, etc.]
3. Get the *correct* call and exchange -- if necessary, be very persistent asking for repeats to confirm the call and the exchange. But be careful you don't lose your run frequency while a weak station is giving his call a bunch of times. If the situation is hopeless, tell the caller, "I'm sorry, you're too weak. Please call me again later when conditions are better. CQ contest..." [Remember: Polite is important. Say "Please," just like your mama taught you.] And telling the station that he's too weak will encourage the other operators listening on frequency to call you -- to prove how they're macho and how their signals are *not weak*! Yeah, it's a psychology game.
4. Keep your frequency clear -- Politely ask people to move if they begin to encroach on your operating space. Tune the encroacher in using the RIT, and then switch on the XIT and say something like, "This is N6BV down on 14.220. You accidentally moved too close to me. Please QSY. Thank you very much." You've got to do this quickly, when they first open up calling CQ. If you let them get several QSOs under their belt, they figure they own the frequency.
5. Sign your call after each QSO. No need for a long, drawn-out signoff. "Thanks, N6BV" works fine. And yes, I know some people think you only need to sign your call every third QSO (or whatever). I've run rate at 200 per hour on CW, signing my call each time. Phone is even faster. YMMV (your mileage may vary).
6. "Nobody answers an apologetic CQ." Make sure your voice has a sense of urgency to it. You have to *demand* rate by the tone of your voice and your rate of speaking. (The same sense of urgency is conveyed, of course, by a relatively high CW speed.)

7. Have two styles of CQs programmed in your DVP: one at warp speed -- some would say “maniacal contester speed” -- (“CQ CQ contest. N6BV N6BV”) and a more leisurely one (“CQ contest CQ contest CQ contest N6BV N6BV contest”). If the rate is slow, alternate between them to make people believe there is a human being behind that big signal, not just a DVP. Or “manually” call CQ every once in a while to mix things up.
8. Work that second radio (SO2R -- Single Operator, Two Radio) on another band; not only for multipliers but also for any station you haven't already worked. For example, the run radio may be CQing on 20 meters, while the second radio is looking for mults/Qs on 15 meters. Yes, this means that you must be able to receive on that second band while transmitting full-bore on the first band. See the *NCCC SS Handbook* for technical details.

Some people can call CQ while tuning and listening to another radio, but so far as I'm concerned they live in an alternate universe! So, unless you are exceptionally talented vocally (and you come from an alternate universe), you will need a DVP (digital voice processor, aka “voice keyer”) programmed with your voice to call CQ while you tune the second band.

Don't let yourself be mesmerized by the dulcet sound of your own voice in the monitor (or by how cool your call sounds on CW as the computer pounds out an exchange). Tune that second radio. I find I can't effectively use a second radio when the run rate exceeds about 120/hour, but below that I force myself to keep tuning the second radio for QSOs or mults. Everyone has his/her own threshold where distraction from the second radio detracts from the CQing effort on the first. YMMV, as always.

9. Occasionally use the second receiver in your radio (if your radio has Main/Sub receivers), tuning around in-between CQs for multipliers or new QSOs on the **same** band. N1MM calls this “SO2V” -- “Single Operator, Two VFOs,” a term I had forgotten about during the July 8 demo at N6RO. SO2V is a very descriptive term for this kind of operating.

SO2V can, however, be frustrating, because you must announce your presence on the band by continuing to call CQ (and you can't listen to the second receiver when you are calling CQ). If you become preoccupied tuning around on the second VFO (and hence aren't calling CQ almost continuously), you risk losing your CQ frequency. So make sure you call CQ with no more than, say, 5-second intervals between the CQs.

Another thing to do when tuning around either the same band or a different band -- Always be on the lookout for a clear frequency to which you might need to jump if your CQ frequency is either stolen or if QRM gets out of hand. You can also see when propagation is changing on the second band and whether you might do better to jump there to call CQ.

10. For headphone switching in SO2R or SO2V operation, I like the way K6TA/K6KO designed their manual rotary switch, using a knob with a large, very obvious pointer on it. My switchbox at N6RO now has a knob with a prominent silver pointer that looks like it came from a 1920s vintage radio. The left position puts audio from the Main radio (the Orion, on the left) into both left/right headphones when the Orion is set up for Main receiver only.

I configure the Orion for the Main receiver to go into both left/right headphones equally. I configure audio from the Sub receiver, however, to go only to the right headphone, and only when the Sub receiver is enabled. When I wish to operate SO2V, I toggle the Sub receiver's audio “on” by momentarily

pushing in the Sub audio gain knob. When a signal is weak and there is QRM, I momentarily press the Sub receiver's audio knob to mute the Sub, and then I can concentrate on only the Main receiver's audio in both ears.

In the switchbox's center position, audio from the Orion's Main receiver goes to the left headphone and audio from the IC-765 goes to the right headphone -- classic SO2R stereo audio operation. The switchbox works this way in its center position regardless of whether the Sub receiver has been enabled or not.

In the right position on the switchbox, the IC-765's audio goes into both headphones. Note that if I had a second Orion (or other radios, like an FT-1000MP) for the right radio, I could use SO2V operation there too, with the Main receiver going into both phones and the Sub receiver into the right headphone only.

9. I handle the switching for transmit audio (microphone and PTT) and CW keyline with another switchbox, which is controlled directly by the computer logging program. Note that I switch both the "hot" and "cold" microphone leads through separate relay contacts to avoid hum.
10. Be familiar with your logging software -
- use the Home and End keys to move the cursor for efficient corrections (rather than hitting the left arrow key or the Delete key 12 times, or even using the mouse on Windows programs...). Keep your fingers on the home keys on your keyboard if you can.

Use the spacebar to toggle between the calls-sign and exchange data-entry points in programs like CT. Use the "?" character in CT as a "wildcard" when you enter a partial call sign. That way CT automatically places the cursor back on the question mark (in *overwrite* rather than *insert* mode) when toggling between entry of the call and the

exchange. The question mark also allows Super Check Partial to work efficiently in CT. In other words, "G3?XF" will show "G3TXF" as at least one of the calls in the Super Check Partial window.

11. The following tips came from Bob Wilson, N6TV. You can remap the keyboard in CT so that "." (period) is the equivalent of function key F1 (CQ). The ";" (semi-colon) key should be the functional equivalent of F5 + F2 (his call and then your exchange). The "' " (apostrophe) key should be the functional equivalent of F3 + F4 (thanks, [Enter] the data into the log and then send your call -- the sequence acknowledging the QSO and then soliciting another call). The "," (comma) key should be the equivalent of sending "?" in CW. The "\" (backslash) key should send your call sign on either SSB or CW. Why all this remapping business? Because then your hands never need to leave the "home keys" on the keyboard. More efficient operation.
12. And if you don't "touch type," you're way behind the eight ball. You need to learn touch-typing. It was the best investment in time I ever made, way back in high school!
13. When two stations call after a CQ, one usually just a little slower than the other, I've got mixed feelings on the technique saying "N6BV standby. N6RO you're 59 06." This may (or may not) freeze the first station in his tracks so that he sticks around on frequency to make a QSO after the first one. But my gut feeling is that it may slow down the overall rate because it might encourage excessive "tail ending" from the pileup and because oftentimes the station you ask to standby doesn't actually standby -- he tries to come back first. Again, YMMV.
14. And although we didn't explicitly discuss this during the clinic at N6RO, nobody does well in a contest except by sitting in the chair and making contacts! He/she with "iron pants" wins!

Some Things I Learned From N6RO and K7NV in the CW Portion of the Clinic.

15. Ken uses a different CW pitch for each radio in his SO2R setup to help differentiate between them.
16. K7NV can send CW ambidextrously when he needs to send a fill. He uses two paddles, one for the left and one for the right radio! (Hmmm, does he come from an alternate planet?)
17. I (re) learned that having a “snood” (a large-diameter rubber cap) placed over the RIT knob allows easier control of the RIT. N6TU used to use the plastic stopper from a champagne bottle for this purpose.
18. I think it is possible on CW to copy more easily two different signals almost simultaneously, at least when compared to voice operation. N6RO and K7NV both tell me they can’t do effective SSB SO2R. Of course, I observed that they are both exceptional CW SO2R ops. My theory is that the amount of “CPU time” (that is, brainpower usage) deciphering a voice signal is greater than that necessary to decipher a CW signal, or even two CW signals. However, I think lots and lots of practice on two-radio SSB will still allow you to improve “CPU usage” in your noggin -- maybe not up to the level of CW, but every little bit helps.
19. It’s really nice to have a strong-enough signal on the second radio (either CW or phone) so that people actually come back to you first or second in a pileup. I guess that’s an understatement...

History of CQP – Part I

Adapted from an article by Bruce Sawyer, AA6KX (now N6NT), for the NCJ in 1995. Augmented with remembrances of John Minke, N6JM (ex-WA6JDT and W6KYA), and Tom Frenaye, K1KI (ex-WN6KIL and WB6KIL)

The California QSO Party (CQP) has experienced phenomenal growth over the past decade or so. It is now the most popular of the state QSO parties and is no longer merely a regional contest.

The first instance of the California QSO Party was way back in the fall of 1966. A couple of high-school students, [Tom, WB6KIL](#), and Gene, WB6EUZ, organized the first running of this event. (For those of you who don’t recognize the calls, WB6KIL later changed his call to K1KI and can still be heard calling a CQ every now and then during contest season!) Tom says he and Gene organized the event for a couple of years as part of the Claremont Ham Club (CHC) in Southern California, but later lost interest when they became old enough to discover other diversions. The succeeding 8 or 9 years of CQP history have eluded us, but then in 1975 the newly organized Northern California Contest Club ([NCCC](#)) took over operation of the contest. [Webmaster's Note: Tom turned the CQP reins over to [John, WA6JDT](#) (now N6JM), who ran it from 1968 to 1974.]

At that time the big events were the Georgia and New Jersey state QSO parties. CQP was a virtual unknown when Rusty Epps, W6OAT, signed on as contest chairman and made an all-out effort to gain publicity and to ensure that there was enough activity from Californians to attract national participation. Rusty had already been down this road; it was he who first organized the Georgia QSO party. He drew heavily from that experience in tackling the California challenge.

Rusty completely revamped the rules for the 1975 event and most of the changes he made are still in effect today. In a radical departure from established practice, the CQP exchange did not include the perfunctory signal report. Instead, it did include a sequence number as well as the multiplier identification, so there was something meaningful to copy. Most importantly, California stations could work each other for QSO credit only; they could not work each other for multipliers. This had the effect of forcing the California stations onto the high bands to seek out contacts around the

country rather than simply hammering away at each other on the low bands. When Rusty instituted this rule it was not popular with the Californians, but the long-term benefits in attracting national participation far outweighed the potential of a doubled-up multiplier total.

The contest was on both CW and SSB; the rules guaranteed that an operator who did not go to both modes would have a hard time reaching the top ranks. But multipliers were counted once per weekend rather than per band in order to keep the score spread down to a level that would not discourage beginners. And the scoring was kept simple by not injecting bonus points into the calculation (e.g., for contacting special stations).

The result of that first NCCC effort was 222 log submissions, of which 116 were from out-of-state. There were entries from 53 counties and 39 states. For the first time, there was operation from all 58 counties and many records were broken. 36 of the non-California single-op records were set, 34 of the 58 county records were toppled and all of the top-10 California stations broke the previous California record! Since the previous year had seen only 70 logs submitted, this was a major success. (Contest history buffs will also recognize W6OAT as the devilish fellow who thought up the Sprint rules, another event that seems to be doing all right in its own regard).

The succeeding years present an interesting picture. Clearly there was a lack of effective follow-through to that first year's success. Rusty was off to law school and simply didn't have the bandwidth to continue running the October games. The contest went into slow but steady decline, finally hitting bottom in 1984 when only 95 logs were submitted.

In 1986, Gary Caldwell, WA6VEF, took over as the contest chairman and did most of the work associated with promoting the event. The difference that one person can make when he lives and breathes a project like this is striking. (Gary now operates under the call VE7NTT and continues to set

CQP records each year.) It is Gary's story that most needs to be heard if we want to understand how this contest came to be so popular. The practices he instituted in promoting the contest are still the ones we follow today.



Rusty, W6OAT, holding court at the joint NCCC/MLDXCC meeting in Jackson.



Tom, K5RC, receives his President's Award shift at the Jackson joint meeting.

--CL--

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