



Publication of the
Northern California
Contest Club



February
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Issue 393

NCCC Net
Thursday 8 PM
3853+/-

Next NCCC Meeting

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

Our Secret Weapons By You!

A show-and-tell event. Bring and explain to the crowd one or two gadgets that make your contesting more effective, easier, more comfortable. Software is OK. Bring it on your laptop -- we'll have a projector.

Date: Monday, 7 February 2005 (a week earlier than usual)

Time: 6:00pm schmooze, 6:30 dinner, 7:30 program

Location: Holder's Country Inn, 998 S. De Anza Blvd., San Jose CA 95129

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Two Tango

Tom Berson, ND2T, NCCC Pres.

The winter contest season is a very busy time. There's a contest – sometimes two – to enter every weekend. And then the weekdays can easily be consumed in doing the paperwork from the last contest(s) and in getting the station and its operator into top form for the next contest(s). On top of this, and because I am trying to recruit our next president, I will not mention the small amount of pleasurable time it takes to run the NCCC. Note to the next president, whoever you are: operators in Palo Alto are standing by to take your call.

With the few mental cycles I can steal in between all this and my day job I have been thinking about the differences between *abstract* and *concrete* as these terms relate to contesting. Back in 7th grade when I learned English grammar, yes, they still were teaching grammar in 1959, that's why I can write these complex sentences without getting my knickers in a twist, I was told that abstract nouns refer to ideas or concepts and that concrete nouns refer to objects or events that were available to the five physical senses. For example, a victory is abstract, an award is concrete.

There is great pleasure to be had from making the abstract concrete. We were victorious in the 2003 Sweepstakes Unlimited Club Competition, and we reveled in our victory over SMC. But it got real for us when we were awarded The Gavel. We passed that concrete instantiation

of our victory around at several club meetings. It served as a tremendous motivator for our 2004 Sweepstakes effort.

We were victorious in the 2004 ARRL RTTY Roundup's inaugural Club Competition. Our victory became concrete last week when K6GT opened the club's mail and found a gavel with a metal plate proclaiming that we had won that competition. We will have the RTTY gavel at the February meeting for you to handle and admire. Rubbing it will give you good fortune in the upcoming NAQP RTTY.

I expect we have Yet More Gavels coming our way: 2004 Sweepstakes and 2005 RTTY RU. Each will be as welcome as the others.

February meeting one week early. Plan to attend and participate in our 7 February meeting. It is being held one week early to accommodate the club's romantics. The theme of the meeting is Our Secret Weapons. It is a show-and-tell event. Bring and explain to the crowd one or two gadgets that make your contesting more effective, easier, more comfortable. Software is OK (hmm, is software concrete or abstract?). Bring it on your laptop -- we'll have a projector.

March meeting and Awards Banquet. The NCCC Awards Gnomes are busy now concretizing your achievements during the past year. They are preparing certificates, plates, plaques, wine labels, and who knows what other concrete objects. I am amazed at the complexity of their job and at their cheerfulness and attention to detail. Plan to come to the Awards Banquet on 14 March.

Member Visit Program (MVP) ends 31 January. Log forms and instructions are on the members' section of the web page.

Visalia Contesting Dinner looking for organizer. Do you enjoy this event? Could you organize it? After years of selfless service Kenny, K2KW, needs to pass his role in organizing the Visalia Contesting

Dinner on to someone else. Catch it before it falls on the floor. No organizer; no dinner. Details from Kenny.

I will now go away to ponder the abstract and concrete aspects of KB, and whether it is polite or rude to wish you some of each.

VP/CC Report

Dean Wood, N6DE

NA Sprint

The NA Sprints are rapidly approaching:

SSB Sprint: 4pm-8pm PST, February 5 [00Z – 04Z February 6]

CW Sprint: 4pm-8pm PST, February 12 [00Z – 04Z February 13]

NCJ Sprint Rules:

<http://www.ncjweb.com/sprintrules.php>

The NCCC traditionally does very well in the Sprint team competition. Remember the NCCC won the September 2004 SSB Sprint, and came close in the September CW Sprint. Let's get out there and try to win these February Sprints!

Bob W6RGG (w6rgg@sbcglobal.net) is the NCCC team coordinator for Sprint CW. Dean N6DE (n6de@arrl.net) is the NCCC team coordinator for Sprint SSB. Please e-mail us to sign up on a team!

Please take a look at these helpful hints on how to operate a Sprint:

The Sprint Survival Web Page -

<http://web.jzap.com/n6tr/sprint.html>

CW Sprinting - Beginners Guide -

<http://www.contesting.com/articles/198>

K5TR's Sprint audio files -

http://www.kkn.net/~k5tr/audio/sprint_practice/

How to finish a CW Sprint QSO -

http://lists.contesting.com/_cq-contest/2003-08/msg00036.html

NA Sprint Practices

Operating a Sprint can be much more enjoyable by practicing before the contest. This is the perfect chance to practice what you've read from the above links. On-air Sprint practices have proven to be great preparation for the real contest. Please join us for the following Sprint practices. The NCCC net will follow every Thursday practice at 8pm PST on 3853 kHz +/-.

CW Sprint Practices

Thursday, January 27, 7:30pm-8:00pm PST
Thursday, February 10, 7:30pm-8:00pm PST
Friday, February 11, 6:30pm-7:00pm PST

SSB Sprint Practices

Thursday, February 3, 7:30pm-8:00pm PST
Friday, February 4, 6:30pm-7:00pm PST

Practice rules are the same as the real Sprint rules:

<http://www.ncjweb.com/sprinrules.php>

Suggested frequencies:

CW Practice: 3545, 7045, 14045 kHz +/-
SSB Practice: 3850, 7225, 14275 kHz +/-
Please be courteous to ongoing QSOs, and please avoid the QRP calling frequency on 7040 kHz.

January NAQP and RTTY Roundup

Congratulations to the NCCC on a terrific turnout for the RTTY Roundup, NAQP CW, and NAQP SSB contests! Many thanks go to Chuck AK6DV, Fred K6DGW, and Dan K6IF for organizing NCCC teams and efforts in these contests, respectively.

The NCCC organized 6 teams for NAQP CW, and 6 teams for NAQP SSB. We are tied with the TCG for the most number of combined teams fielded. Remember that TCG solicits signups from the entire contest community, regardless of whether they are a TCG member. The NCCC intentionally doesn't. The NCCC should be very proud of the activity we generated in these contests. NCCC Team #1 also scored very well in both the CW and SSB weekends.

Early score reports show that we will finish in second place in both contests!

NCCC turnout for the RTTY Roundup was equally as impressive, with over 25 NCCC members who participated. Remember that we won the inaugural RTTY Roundup club gavel last year, and have a great chance to repeat this year. Early claimed scores show that PVRC has narrowed the gap this year, but we are still in the lead for a repeat gavel!

Sweepstakes Claimed Scores

Your VP/CC has done a lot of detective work, and has some reasonably accurate and comprehensive 2004 Sweepstakes club claimed totals, based on ARRL received log data. Here's how it is looking before log checking:

NCCC: 20.7M points, 251 entries
SMC: 13.7M points, 203 entries
PVRC: 10.8M points, 136 entries
All other clubs finished well under 10M points.

This appears to be a HUGE victory for the NCCC! Our 2003 margin of victory was 5.5M points. It looks our 2004 performance will exceed that. Congratulations to every NCCC member who helped make this happen!

February Contests

*NA Sprint SSB: 00Z – 04Z February 6
*CQ WPX RTTY: 00Z February 12 – 24Z February 13

<http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/121204RTTY%20WPX%20Rules%202005.pdf>

*NA Sprint CW: 00Z – 04Z February 13
*ARRL DX CW: 00Z February 19 – 24Z February 20

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2005/intldx.html>

*NAQP RTTY: 18Z February 26 – 06Z February 27

<http://www.ncjweb.com/naqprules.php>

Jeff Stai, Mr. NCCC ... aka WK6I Ed Muns, W0YK

The more I get to know Jeff, the more impressed I am with his many facets. As concerns Ham radio contesting, I think each of us can find bits of our own contesting experience in Jeff. Hence, my moniker "Mr. NCCC".

In my case, I'm as interested in Jeff's winery development as his Ham radio involvement. In fact, it was a wine maker's dinner that got Mary and me plus another couple (mutual friends of the Stai's and ourselves) over to the wonderful Gold Country hamlet of Murphys and the opportunity to tour Jeff's modest station on a one-acre hillside lot. I have to say that the conception and creation of Twisted Oak Winery in just three short years would be envied by anyone in the wine industry. If he ever finds time to apply this talent to developing top-end contest station ... watch out! The NCCC club competition scores will ratchet up another notch. I'll have to leave the winery part of the story for another time.

Jeff is a relatively new amateur and even newer contesteer, being first licensed as a Technician in 1996. With an interest in Ham radio dating back to the seventh grade though, Jeff finally got licensed as KE6KNF in order to chat with his buddies on VHF FM during the daily work commute in Orange County. He quickly discovered and fell in love with 6 meters, working nearly all states and 34 countries from his residential lot in Southern California. Needing to copy the 6-meter beacons spurred an interest in Morse code and via the VEC work of the South Orange Amateur Radio Association, Jeff progressed to KQ6VQ with his Advanced license. Soon, he upgraded to Extra and obtained the current WK6I call sign. All of this also drove his budding interest in HF.

Like many of us, Jeff's introduction, and seduction!, into contesting was via a couple

hours of 20 meter phone work at a Field Day operation one year. He went home, erected an antenna farm of a single 40-meter dipole strung between two 20 foot poles on his 75' wide lot. Then he acquired a Force 12 aluminum crank-up pole, C3SS and M2 5-element 6-meter Yagi that expanded the antenna farm to just clear the residential rooftops! Jeff's first contest was CQWW Phone which he logged on a yellow legal pad ... for a few pages until he discovered the concept of dupes and spent the rest of the contest flipping through his legal pad to determine if the current station was a dupe or not! That inspired him to discover WriteLog which has been the mainstay logger ever since. For the last year or two in Southern California, Jeff's Ham radio time was split between contesting and 6-meter work.

Jeff also had an interest in the digital modes and played a bit with PSK31. He tried RTTY unsuccessfully a few times until he eventually discovered the secret that RTTY is on LSB while PSK31 is on USB. This revelation emerged on a DXCC card checking visit to Arnie, N6HC, who also gave Jeff a grand tour of his station, including RTTY. "Oh, THAT'S how it works!" One of the attractions of RTTY contesting for Jeff is the lower number of big gun participants, making a good showing more attainable by the rest of us. Arnie's SO2R with all the filters and stubs to eliminate inter-radio interference also intrigued Jeff and inspired his own eventual SO2R setup in Murphys.

Murphys? Why Murphys? The Stai family took vacations to Lake Alpine, 50 miles beyond Murphys when they lived in Southern California. The fond recommendation, "heaven on earth", of a friend of Mary's (Jeff's wife) who spent summers up there was the kick start. Then, when Jeff spied the opportunity to eject from the Southern California rat race, the family moved to Murphys ... the only alternative that was common between Mary's and Jeff's desired landing spots. In

the past three years, Jeff migrated from “Wouldn’t it be fun to have a small vineyard” to “Gosh, we’re running a modern 12,000-case winery that we just built from scratch!” When they moved into their second home in Murphys, Jeff began setting up his Ham station again. A nice shack was constructed in one side of the garage, Force 12 and SteppIR antennas were erected (see table), and an KB SO2R station is still developing. The station is based on a pair of FT-1000D’s, Top Ten decoders and coax switching, Dunestar 600 filtering, the WriteLog SO2R box and, of course, WriteLog itself. At times a pair of Elecraft K2’s are run in QRP contests.



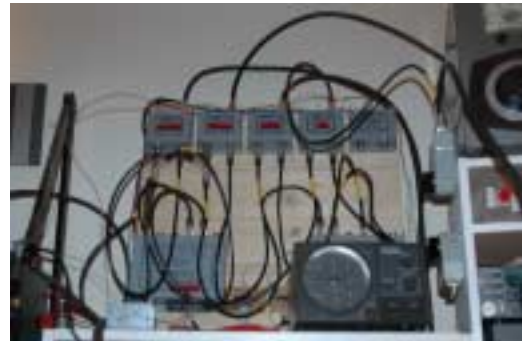
WK6I's shack with left-side FT-1000 in view.



Here's the right-hand FT-1000.

Jeff’s antennas are modest, also. For 80 m he uses a Sigma 80 vertical, and for 40 m he switches to a Sigma 40. The 20 m antenna is a Sigma 40XK fixed on 14 MHz, and for 20

through 6 meters, Jeff has a three-element SteppIR yagi.



This is a view of WK6I's antenna switching and SteppIR rotation control area.



Jeff covers 20 through 10 meter with this three-element SteppIR yagi.

How did Jeff find the NCCC two years ago? Well, he didn’t ... we found him! I think it was N6ZFO who was mining California contest results, discovered Jeff and recruited him into the club. One of Jeff’s first NCCC “arm-twists” was the 2003 Sweepstakes club effort and he has participated in most major contests (Phone, CW and RTTY) ever since. He is getting close to having wallpaper and plaques to adorn his shack walls. Pending log checking, he may have set a new Pacific Section record in the ARRL RTTY Roundup in early January 2005 with his outstanding SO2R effort.

Now that the winery is mostly complete, Jeff is progressing on the construction of a new home with a spectacular view on a hill just behind his first Murphys home. Completion is two or more years out and the layout will

probably only allow one tower at that location. However, the winery property has a 40-acre section that would be ideal for growing an elaborate antenna farm. So, the potential is for Murphys to sprout an NCCC mega-station one of these days.

For those of you who are interested in experiencing a modern-day Randall Graham (Bonny Doon Winery) emerging out in Murphys, stop by Jeff's web site, www.twistedoak.com, or better yet, jump in the car and head over there. As long as you are at the computer, though, check out www.rocstock.org, the "NCCC of amateur rocketry" of which Jeff is an avid member and web master. Sporting over 300 members, the Rocketry Organization of California may be the largest in the world. One of their launch events must be a sight to behold!

HS1FJ

By Fred Jensen, K6DGW

Not long ago, while cleaning out some ancient tax records in an upstairs closet, I came across a large box filled with slides from early '64 through the end of '67 when I was serving in the USAF in a Combat Communications Unit in SE Asia. For less than \$20.00, Long's put several hundred of them on CD's for me. One reminded me of the one time I was the DX, and Rob thought it might be an interesting story for NCCC.

Our unit's mission was to provide initial communications and aircraft navigational aids to all of the services in the two Vietnams, Laos, and occasionally Thailand. Our HQ was at Clark AB in the Philippines, and we always took Collins KWM-2A's with us to stay in touch with them since many of our sites were on isolated mountain tops. (Despite having 50+ voice channels and several hundred TTY channels running through our gear, they all belonged to someone else, so good old SSB and occasionally CW were our stand-byes)

Thailand in the mid-60's was paradise, especially compared to the other locations we frequented. Incredibly friendly people, nobody trying to kill you, great weather, way better food in the village market than in the mess hall, and Bangkok for R&R!

Our commander's policy was therefore that teams for missions to Thailand would be formed from those troops who had been taking it in the shorts, so to speak, in less desirable locations. Near the end of 1964, my shorts apparently were showing sufficient damage, so I was assigned a team of about 25 troops with similarly tattered shorts to put an AN/MRC-98, AN/MRC-80, and AN/TRC-96 into Korat, a small city and provincial capital pretty close to the center of Thailand. The Thais had allowed the US to build an airfield there and fly F-105 missions from it.

We staged all the gear (12 semi-trailers, collapsed 30' dish antennas, and smaller vans, tractors to pull them, and all the other equipment) at Don Muang Airport, the International Airport for Bangkok and also a Thai military base. Just before leaving for Korat, I met with the US Military Assistance Group in downtown Bangkok to arrange for fuel and other support. Turned out, the S-3 was a Colonel who was a ham, and he mentioned that he could get me a license, "if I was interested." After thinking this over for about 3.1416 microseconds, I said I'd be happy if he did. We had the ubiquitous KWM-2A's with us, so I wrote home and asked my Dad to send me my Vibroplex and a home-brewed keyer, telling him to take off the cover, remove the 11 tubes, and wrap them in paper or foam. I got the package about 3 weeks later, which pretty much coincided with the arrival of my license and the completion of our equipment installs which gave me some free time.

The KWM-2A's were set up with the Team's other admin stuff in a B-2 hut, and we had 2 GRA-4 dipoles, of which we only used one for the military circuits, so I adjusted the second one to 20 CW. For my first try, I

told one of my troops that I'd pull his watch at the site that night, and spent the time that I wasn't doing USAF things, on CW. I had figured that I might make a handful of contacts. I warmed up the keyer (the large aluminum box on the right in the photo) and the radio, tuned it, and signed my call.



The shack in Korat, Thailand.

As a kid, I never really got into DX, and at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, my activity was confined to a weekly 40m schedule with my friends down in So. Cal. Thus, I was somewhat unprepared to find what seemed like the entire band on my frequency calling me. I did catch on to the fact that DX QSO's consisted of "5NN TU," and I probably made about 25 contacts that night in between tending the "real" equipment. I also learned how often to sign my call (infrequently!).

Thereafter, I managed to get on the air several nights each week. The 3KW TRC-96 was about 400 meters away, but was operating in the 5 MHz range, so I had no big problems with it. It was illegal for US hams to work Thailand during that time -- ironic, no? -- but, many did call and I worked as many as I could figuring it would be their problem, not mine.

Then, a new problem surfaced ... no QSL cards: I gave my younger brother's call (WA6QJY) as a QSL address, and fairly soon, a letter comes from Mom asking me what she should do with all the cards that were arriving in the mail. I cobbled a design

together, spent at least an hour and a half trying to explain to a small print shop downtown what I wanted, and finally had a stack of 500 cards for 150 Baht (then \$7.50). I mailed them home, and asked my parents to send one to each person who sent me a card and who appeared on the makeshift log pages I tore out of my journal and sent home. I guess when you're "fighting for freedom" in a country no one is actually at war with, you can ask your parents to do most anything, and they will.

I was in Korat for another month and a half or so, and I got better at the pileups. Russians abounded, as did the western Pacific and South Asia. The western US was quite strong most of the time, however anything east of the Rockies tended to be weak and hard to pull out of the pileups. I am surprised at the courtesy I got, although at the time, I just took it for granted. I made some friends on the SEANet, and some good Aussie friends, one of whom I ran into in an obscure place in So. Vietnam later on. Everyone would give us a little time to converse, and then pounce when I sent the "QRZ?"

The end, when it came, came quickly ... a very short conversation with my Commander in the Philippines who said, "Scrounge a flight to Da Nang, and meet your new team." I never saw my bug or keyer again.



Fred, now K6DGW, then, HS1FJ.

--CL--

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