

JUG

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Contest Club



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

NCCC-REDXA JOINT MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9th, 2011
Program
"Broadband Antenna Options For 80M"
(Stu Phillips, K6TU)

Date: Wednesday, February 9, 2011

Time: 6:00pm social hour; 7:00pm dinner, 7:45-9:00pm program

Location: Gourmet Garden; 200 South McDowell Blvd.;
Petaluma, CA (707) 778-3899

Directions:

<http://www.redxa.com/specialaugust2010meetingnotice.pdf>

Dinner is a mostly Asian buffet at \$11.99 plus tax, tip, and drinks, paid at the restaurant.

Please RSVP to REDXA President Ron Castro, N6IE
(ronc@sonic.net) for his "Headcount" list.

NCCC Officers

President: Jack Brindle, W6FB, jackbrindle@earthlink.net
VP/CC: Chris Tate, N6WM, ctate@ewnetinc.com
Sec/Treas.: Barry Pfeil, K6RM, barrypfeil@sbcglobal.net

Directors

Past President: Jack Morgan, KF6T, jackmorgan.usa@gmail.com
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Director: Bob Wolbert, K6XX, k6xx@ihwy.com
Director: Hank Garretson, W6SX, w6sx@arrl.net
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Webmaster: John Miller, John.Miller.K6MM
JUG Editor: Rob Brownstein, k6rb@baymoon.com



FB's Message

By Jack Brindle, W6FB

Over the years contest stations have always consisted of several elements - a receiver, transmitter, antennas and gadgets.

You know the gadgets, they included TR switches, keyers, SWR bridges and several other things. They are the "glue" that hold our stations together.

Over time the receiver and transmitter have merged into the transceiver, and along the way they incorporated some of the gadgets - first the TR switch, then the keyer, and a few other things.

Yet as all this has happened, the proliferation of gadgets has grown as we add more and more functionality to our stations. Some of these are homebrew, others are bought, but we all have them.

For many years my favorite homebrew gadget was the antenna tuner. The elmers and OTs who got me started convinced me on the merits of the tank-style parallel-tuned LC circuit that is especially adept at feeding open-wire fed antennas. Not-so coincidentally, they (along with my college professors) convinced me of the merits of open-wire feed and why all my antennas should use it.

Of course these guys were not contesters with the need for fast antenna switching, but they did have good, sound arguments. And it just so happened, the very thing needed for their favorite antenna feed was a really cool gadget. I build quite a few over the years for high, low and QRP levels, using manufactured and home-wound coils. Of course winding the coils was a lot of the fun. Creating one for 80 or 160 meters that was self supporting and stayed together was a major task in itself. For higher power, these things were usually about 3 or so inches in diameter and maybe a foot long. When a train went by in the distance you could see the coil vibrate in resonance to the train motion. It was definitely way cool!

Over time my antenna tuners became more sophisticated, adding an SWR bridge to help me tune the antenna. Then the need to automate the procedure took over, along with the move to coax-fed antennas. Today the antenna tuner is automated, able to tune itself in just a few seconds. It is not quite as fun as the older tuners (which I still have), but it usually gets the job done. Of course, the tribander on the antenna support has eliminated the need for tuning the high bands, but that did add one more gadget - the antenna switch.

The antenna switch was first an actual switch with a knob close to the operating position (my first was built into an antenna tuner!). Later this became automated. The radio now automatically selects the antenna. Time and automation march on.

This sounds like the gadgets are combining and should be disappearing, right? Why no, they are multiplying! Now we have a separate keyer (it is more controllable than the one built-in to the transceiver), the antenna selector, antenna tuner, SWR bridges and a few other things to boot. But, we also made another addition that every contester now must have.

The addition of computers to the station has really made the proliferation of gadgets take off! We now need rig interfaces. At first these were the simple RS-232 interface, now replaced with a USB dongle. The sound card interface soon followed, allowing the

computer to “hear” the same thing we hear. Of course, so far its hearing isn’t quite as good as ours. But at least it doesn’t get tired! And, all of these various gadgets must talk to each other so they can give us the illusion of being controlled.

Yet along the way, we all use, and need these things to help us with our contesting. They have become very important in allowing us to concentrate on the contest exchange itself, offloading many tasks that we used to handle ourselves. We still build or buy the gadgets. And we have become adept at crafting the things to do exactly what we want. After all, being a ham is not just about operating, but very much about building our stations, equipment and gadgets!

The April meeting will be a celebration of the gadgets we use in our shacks. We will invite everyone to bring a sample of their gadgets, either something they built or bought, but it should be something that provides a very important function in your station, one that you appreciate, but maybe didn’t realize you needed until one day the idea hit. There will be more info about the gadget meeting building up to the April gathering.

This afternoon we learned of the sudden illness of Tom McShane, NW6P. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Tom, his family and his many friends. May his recovery be quick and complete.

VP/CC
Chris Tate, N6WM

Greetings KB’ers..

With the release of the results of the 2010 ARRL sweepstakes CW, and the imminent release of the SSB results, and subsequently the overall affiliated club competition, there has been a lot of buzz on the email reflector regarding recognition, and results, and even awards, so I thought I would share some of my thoughts on the process, and our process as a club.

Those who have been part of this club for even a short while know that we push hard every year as a club to attempt to produce the highest affiliated club score in the country. After all, it is this rivalry with the other side of the country that this club was founded on. As contesters we pride ourselves on our achievements, so when official results come out, it goes without saying that we celebrate our inclusion in the top ten box or even at the top of the pack!

The 2010 CW results are no exception, with some of the finest testers in the world producing top scores under the NCCC banner, and showing up in the box of the official results. I know I can speak for the entire club in congratulating these operators for their achievements and for their contributions to the affiliated club competition score.

However there is so much more going on in this contest. Different operators contribute in many different ways to our annual Sweepstakes effort. And one has to look a bit closer to see those contributions. But it is none-the-less important that we do so!

There are those that turn in monster scores, typically winning the official division titles, or section titles, and make the official top-ten box. But there are many, many others. We have top club operators that split operations between two days and two stations, sometimes producing more points combined than the single operator leaders.

These ops do not show up in the official results, but their contributions and sacrifice are as much if not sometimes more monumental than the official top scores. There are others that cannot split operations, because they are pursuing other goals, such as WRTC qualification, for which this contest is an integral part of that qualification process. We have folks that get out there from apartments, and do their best under adverse conditions to add to the club score. We have operators with average stations that do their best, year after year, consistently contributing to NCCC success. Some folks compete in lower power categories, because they find it a challenge, or it's the only option available to them.

This is why we have an internal awards program, because so many different operators contribute in so many different ways; and many do so below the official radar, at a sacrifice to their own personal glory. Why? For the club and for the better affiliated club competition score, and an attempt at an NCCC win. This collective group deserves their day as well, but when the official results come out, they of course are absent from the official top scores.

So where am I going with all of this? Well, it's as simple as this. We all need to recognize that we treat this contest quite differently from others. So when these official results come out, celebrate our top NCCC operators that made it into the top ten or won the division, or section titles, but then, take a look at our scores table, and take a moment to recognize some of the fine operators that made a sacrifice of their official results, for the betterment of our overall club score. The Sweepstakes competition is truly a team effort, with many different contribution levels, that all come together to produce annually one of the top scores in the nation. (hopefully, a winning one!).

The club camaraderie for the 2010 Sweepstakes competition was incredible. We (the club, AKA our team) all did a fantastic job. So many worked very hard to contribute, to better their previous effort and more, and that was truly inspiring to me and should be to you as well.

So however this completion plays out, let me be the first to congratulate everyone, from the heavy hitters, to the FB split operators, to those who tried hard to do a little better this year, to everyone who got on the air and gave it their best. Based on what I have seen, we are already winners in my book, and it was a proud time for me to be in service to the club as VP/CC.

Well done to everyone, and remember to check that scores table, because there are silent heroes there that deserve congratulations as well!

73 and of course KB!



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ANAHEIM, CA
(Near Disneyland)
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BURBANK, CA
1525 W. Magnolia Bl., 91506
(818) 842-1786
(800) 854-6046
Eric, K6EJC, Mgr.
Magnolia between
S. Victory & Buena Vista
burbank@hamradio.com

OAKLAND, CA
2210 Livingston St., 94606
(510) 534-5757
(800) 854-6046
Mark, W17YN, Mgr.
I-880 at 23rd Ave. ramp
oakland@hamradio.com

SAN DIEGO, CA
5375 Kearny Villa Rd., 92123
(858) 560-4900
(800) 854-6046
Josa, XE2SJB, Mgr.
Hwy. 163 & Claremont Mesa
sandiego@hamradio.com

SUNNYVALE, CA
510 Lawrence Exp. #102
94085
(408) 736-9496
(800) 854-6046
Jon, K6WV, Mgr.
So. from Hwy. 101
sunnyvale@hamradio.com



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