

Sierra Signals

Sierra Foothills Amateur Radio Club
Auburn, CA
An ARRL Special Service Club

<http://sf-arc.org>

March 2005

P.O. Box 1005, Newcastle, CA 95658

Straight Key Night and the Electronic Age

Casey McPartland, W7IB

On New Year's Eve I took the opportunity, as I often try to, take part in the annual Straight Key Night (SKN). I usually only make 10 or less contacts but I look for old friends, or new hams to chat with. Sometimes I look for calls that I recognize from "legendary exploits" or articles that I've read. As a side comment, I thought that SKN 2005 was much better attended than past events...I worked some old timers, real CW masters, that were in the event for the *first time*, using their Novice straight key that hadn't been dusted off in many years! That was great to hear in this time of the great CW "die out!"

Now to the purpose of this piece – how sweet it is to hear what a person's "fist" really sounds like! Each of us has a personality when we operate a manual key, be it a straight key, or a bug (semi-automatic key). There was time that one could tell that "Sparky" or Ann



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RESOURCES

REPEATERS

145.430 (-0.6 MHz/PL 162.2)
440.575 (+5.0 MHz/PL 94.8)
223.860 (-1.6 MHz/PL 100.0)

CLUB NET

All welcome to check in
Thursdays, 7:30PM, K6ARR/R
145.430

CLUB MEETINGS

Second Friday of the month,
7:30PM at the Library, 350
Nevada St, Auburn CA

CLUB BREAKFAST

Last Sat of the month at Susie's
Café, Cirby at Riverside, Roseville
- 8:00 AM

NET CONTROL OPS

Dave Jenkins, WB6RBE
Gary Cunningham, KQ6RT
Joe Sylvia, KF6OQY
Casey McPartland, W7IB

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or "Red" were on the band just by tuning by a frequency where they were operating. I believe that if you work someone enough times, you can do just that, know them by their "fist". The way they "swung" a K or an R told the observer that it was in fact that old friend, or that "legendary op."

As some of you know, I work a "slow to medium" speed net each Sunday morning, and have for almost two years (the OCNW – Orange County Wireless Net meets each Sunday morning at 0900 on or about 7086 khz). I've met and become friends with KF6UEB, Rick who generally presides over the net. It's a great environment to learn CW round table and net operations and to associate and (See "SKN" on Pg 2)

2005 Calendar of Events

(Operating Events in Italics)

Mar 4-6	ARRL DX Contest (SSB)
Mar 7	Spartan Sprint
Mar 11	Regular Meeting
Mar 12	North American Sprint (RTTY)
Mar 25 - 27	CQ WPX (RTTY)
Mar 26	Club Breakfast
Apr 4	Spartan Sprint
Apr 8	Regular Meeting
Apr 29	Club Breakfast

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Minutes

Board Of Directors 11 Feb 2005

The SFARC Board of Directors met at 1845 hours at the Auburn, California Main Library.

In attendance: Casey, W7IB; George, KG6LSB; Donna, KD6PJJ; Larry, AE6CC; and Kevin, K7TST.

Discussion Items: Location and dates of club Field Day, Club Picnic, and the Christmas Party. Donna advised that she will have to find a new supplier for club badges as the old source no longer makes them. Joe KF6OQY suggested the club send a birthday to John "Ed" Ahlstrom, KQ6CK, on the occasion of his 95th birthday.

At 1910 hours, Kevin moved to adjourn the Board meeting, which was seconded by George, and passed.

Regular Meeting 11 Feb 2005

At 1932 hours, the Regular Meeting was called to order by President Casey McPartland, W7IB. He led 37 members and visitors, attending, in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. He then invited all to introduce themselves.

A discussion followed regarding coming events: The MS Walk, Field Day, Club Picnic and the Christmas Party.

The minutes of the January meeting were read by Secretary Paul, KB6NYB. A motion to accept the minutes as read was made by Richard, NU6T and seconded by Kevin, K7TST. Motion was carried.

Officers' Reports followed: Presidents report by Casey, W7IB; Treasurers report by Donna; KG6PJJ; VE Report by Larry, AE6CC; and the ARES Report by Joe, WB6AGR.

At 2006 hours, there was a break for refreshments provided by Debbie, KF6LXN. Thanks Deb!

At 2020 hours, Casey, W7IB, called the meeting back to order and introduced the guest speaker, Jim Pearce, Wb6OVH. Jim gave a talk and slide presentation about APRS.- Automatic Position Reporting System and the "tiny tracker."

At 2112 hours, Gary held the raffle, with many happy winners.

The meeting was adjourned at 2120 hours.

Respectfully submitted
Paul Alford, KB6NYB
Secretary

Forty Years Ago at the SFARC

Reported by Gary, KQ6RT

17 Mar 2005

Meeting called to order by Vice President WB6KUT Joe, as President K6ZWZ was on a vacation in Japan.

Secretary and Treasurer gave their reports and they were accepted as read.

Rich Ryan will work up a program for next month.

Carl K6QKC gave a report on the CD progress. Forms have been filled out and sent in to the FCC and a list of all the Hams in Placer County has been made up and a meeting will be set up soon to acquaint all the Hams that are interested in the CD program and will take part in organizing a unit.

Rich Ryan and Jim Carman will head a committee to get organized for Field Day.

We are asked to again work communications for the 100 Mile Trail Ride to be held in July. We will have a base station at the fair Grounds and four portable or mobile stations to take care of. It was approved by all present to use SSB for this operation as far as possible.

A motion was made to discontinue the Newsletter---MOTION DEFEATED

A motion was made for everyone to submit a news item or something for the paper. MOTION CARRIED.

WB6KUT gave a report on our Trailer. He has obtained a complete undercarriage heavy enough to handle the trailer and its equipment. He will call on members when he is ready for them to help him. He will call only enough to do a specific job at one time.

A discussion was held regarding SSB on our Sunday Morning Net. All members present stated that they had no objection with SSB and AM on the net at the same time. It was agreed to continue net operations on Sunday Mornings with both modes of operation being welcome and entirely up to the member. It was surprising that all members were in favor of the SSB mode and not one member against it. (it was a different time then! Ed.)

12 members present, 1 visitor.

Prizes won by:

Joe Merryman	Lombards
Lee Bowman	Calif T V
Sig Goepner	Selectronics

FRANK CARMAN
Secretary

MS Walk

George, KG6LSB

The MS Walk volunteers must attend the training meeting on Saturday March 12 at 1PM in the Auburn Veteran's Hall, 100 East St. (the building with the cannons).

This only applies to those working the Auburn walk on April 2nd. The volunteers for the Rocklin walk on the 16th need not attend.

George Simmons, KG6LSB
kg6lsb@arrl.net

SKN (continued from front page)

become friends with some really high-quality ops. I consider them all my friends and will go out of my way to work them when I hear them on the bands. Some of these operators have developed CW styles, even with an electronic keyer that allows one to identify them without hearing a name or call sign – they use the keyer to vary the weight of the dots and dashes, or they send some characters with a different rhythm (there's that swing again!), or they send their call a certain way that differentiates them from the "pack". Some of these op's do all of the above! At any rate, I find that these are the op's who have spent a lot of time sending with a manual keyer, and listening to what good and bad "spacing" sounds like, before creating a swing, fist, or personality. ["Spacing" is that which enables one to determine what is a letter, number, character, word, etc. from a seemingly aimless and uninterrupted stream of dits and dahs – if you learn the code and listen, you'll hear bad spacing frequently! I believe that an operator who doesn't space well on a manual key, won't become better by moving to a paddle and electronics!]

So, during the SKN it was a pleasure to hear what most people "really" sound like. I have found that some "cheat" and slow-down their electronic keyers to play in the SKN, but that's relatively easy to determine, just by listening. Cheating is strange to me, unless there is a physical reason that a keyer is needed (lost limbs, crippling arthritis, or some such thing), because SKN is not a contest! SKN is a grand opportunity to meet some new folks, renew acquaintances with the not-so-new, and to hone the skills of spacing and developing a CW persona – these things only come from the practice of *not* using the "crutch" of electronic keying. The only prize is to be mentioned as someone's most interesting SKN contact – to some of us, that's worth a fortune!

So, here's what brought me to write this little rant – the straight key vs. the electronic keyer. I worked OM Rick, KF6UEB on SKN, and when I found him, I knew it was him before I heard his call...his impeccable style, swing, and spacing called out his "name!" On Sunday, I checked into the OCNW, as usual, and found that I wasn't quite sure who the NCS was. "Strange," I thought, "I think it's Rick, but he's a little faster than usual (no problem there), and his dits and dahs are a little *too* perfect. Hmmmmmm!" Then he signed and it was Rick. He went on to mention that he had dug out the paddle during Christmas and was putting it to work on the net that day. It just

struck me as "funny", here's someone I've worked once a week for nearly a 2 years and I could barely tell it was him!

So, I ponder - where's our identity in this wondrous electronic age?

Tnx fer the read, and 73!

Casey, W7IB

So, Just What Is The CW Receiving Record and Who Holds IT?

From the Elecraft E-mail Reflector

(Sometimes things just fall together like they were planned even though they weren't. Knowing I'd need some fodder for this issue, I latched onto the following account[s] of the setting of the CW receiving record before Casey's article arrived. Now, it really fits in here! Ed.)

As the record books stand today, the world's record for code reception "by ear" was set on July 2, 1939 by Ted R. McElroy, giving him the title of Official Champion Radio Operator at the Asheville Code Tournament in North Carolina. His record of 75.2 wpm has stood ever since.

How fast is 75 WPM? Well, tune in one W1AW's Fast Code Practice segments on 14.047 MHz some weekday afternoon. They begin at 35 WPM. Imagine, if you can, just a tad over twice that speed, and you're close.

When the test began, McElroy is reported to have astounded the audience by calmly sipping a cup of coffee then lighting an cigarette while the transmission blasted away before sitting down at the "mill" (a manual typewriter with all capital letters specifically for copying CW).

Then he is reported to have kept typing 15 minutes after the transmission ended to finish transcribing the entire text. Obviously, a good memory was helpful! There are folks who can copy well over that in their head in a conversational mode, but it's a lot different if you have to actually record it on paper.

Someone recently reported that the receiving test for a First Class Radioman's Certificate in the US Navy during and immediately after World War II was conducted in 5-letter code groups at 25 WPM. A passing score was no more than 3 errors ... in one hour of copy! Why so tough? Well, if you are copying code groups, they will have to be decrypted to recover the clear text message, and even a single letter error will significantly foul up the decoding process.

Our own Jettie Hill, W6RFF, learned to copy 25 or 30 WPM on a typewriter, and had to sight-read an inked tape at 50 WPM to maintain his proficiency as a military operator. He's still proficient, as any QSO with him in a CW contest will attest.

In addition to being the Champion Radio Operator, Ted founded a company that marketed CW products such as keys, automatic keying machines fed by punched paper tape, etc., for many years. It does seem strange that his receiving record hasn't been bested in over 60 years, even by a small amount.

Amateur Satellites

SSETI Comes Together



What do you get when you mix 250 students, a rocket laboratory, and the Internet? Only the latest micro satellite project: the Student Space Education and Science Initiative's SSETI Express Satellite.

The SSETI Express is a micro satellite project staffed by students, universities, and experts, scattered across Europe, and linked via the Internet. The finished product will actually result in four satellites; three small "cube sats" and a main carrier craft. The cubes, which measure only 10cm on a side (yes, that's a tad under 4 inches) are being built by students in Germany, Norway, and Japan. Each cube is a test bed for a different technology, and are functional satellites in their own right. They will be deployed from the main craft once the combination reaches orbit. The main spacecraft is a 60cm x 60cm x 70cm box which houses an experimental cold-gas propulsion system from Germany, an Earth-facing camera, and Amateur Radio communication systems from hams in Germany and England. The radios will operate as a transponder on the 70cm and 13 cm (430 mhz and 2.4 ghz) bands. Other components include solar panels from the ESA-sponsored Dutch Nuna II solar car, an electrical power system from an Italian team in Naples, and an onboard computer Aalborg in Denmark.

It took about a year to go from design to integration, which began last November. In terms of satellite progress, this is a very rapid project. If all goes well, the satellite will be launched piggyback, bolted to another spacecraft on a commercial Cosmos DMC-3 launch from Plesetsk in Russia.

The project has a home page with more information, pictures, and links to other ESA projects. Visit http://www.esa.int/esaCP/SEMKNZ990E_index_0.html, or do a Google search for SSETI Express. There is even a webcam showing the spacecraft integration lab. More news as the spacecraft gets closer to its launch date.

73,

Greg KO6TH

Sacramento Valley Section

Jettie Hill, W6RFF - Section Manager



Can you believe it, two months have passed in this year 2005. It seems like yesterday that year 2004 ended. They say time goes faster when you are having fun -- but are we having fun? As we get older and stiff in the joints?? The Golden Years! My computer went down again and I had to erase the hard disk again to get it

running, so all programs have been inserted back into it and I hope it will hold up longer this time.

The League has announced that the FCC is working hard on what changes to make to the amateur radio rules, and may make a proposal of changes by the year end. After their proposal they will ask for comments, and could make the changes by the year 2007 or earlier. Read about it on the ARRL web home page. The information on the web, changes daily, so it is a good idea to check it a few times each week.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION COURSES: The grant from the Federal Government will be up soon and June will be the last month you can sign up for any of the 3 [emergency] communication courses -- 001, 002, 003, and be reimbursed for the fee upon completion (\$45 fee). Registration for 001 is the first Monday of the month, 002 on the second Monday and 003 on the third Monday. On the Pacific Coast, you can register after 9 pm on Sunday evenings. The Section has had many members complete one or more of the courses, but there is many more that have not taken them. If you are interested in EMCOMM, the courses can increase your knowledge and efficiency. The fire season will be with us soon, and always a possibility of floods this winter. Be sure you know who the Emergency Coordinator is, for your county or area. Dave Thorne, K6SOJ, can always give you information. Contact him at k6soj@arrl.net.

WIND DAMAGE: Norm Brooks, K6FO, lost part of his 70 foot tubular mast in a wind storm. The mast folded over at the 40 foot height, but the HF Yagi did not hit the ground. Norm is dealing with his insurance company at getting it replaced. It is a good idea to check with your Home Owner's policy to see if it covers ham antennas. I lost my 80 meter inverted V, which is still not repaired and some fence. Requires disconnecting, lowering and tilting over the mast to repair. (40 foot mast). I am sure others have had wind damage this winter.

RIVER CITY ARCS: Dale, AD6CT, RCARCS President reports that his club and [the] North Hills RC are cooperating in several joint activities such as joint meetings, picnics, Field Day. It is good to hear of cooperation between groups, and not fighting with each other. Both clubs meet at the Sacramento County Corporation Yard, RCARCS on the first Tuesday of the month and North Hills RC on the Third Tuesday. North Hills will have an Open House at their April meeting, with demonstrations and descriptions of all modes of ham gear. Their annual Swap Meet is in May.

SILENT KEY: RCARCS reports that long time member Arthur Gilchrist, AB6UZ, became a SK on February 13. Condolences to his wife Betty, AC6IL. Also, Darlene, the wife of Roy Rudebaugh, KD6LLE, passed away after a lengthy illness. A memorial service will be held March 19, at the Camellia Mobile Home Park at 7 PM.

EL DORADO ARC: Club President, Jay Harmor, KE6GLA, made a lengthy presentation, to the club, on weather -- he says he will never put the group through that again. Harry Miller, W6HFM, club VP is looking for volunteers for Sierra Century Bike ride on June 4, 2005. This takes many operators for rest stops and SAG wagons. Contact Jay at 530.677.1254 if you can help.

MOTHER LODE DXCC: The club's move to lone for their meetings, is working well. The lone Hotel has nice rooms for meeting and lunch, and the food is good. The club is in the planning stage for the annual group meeting with the Northern California Contest Club. The meeting may be held in Jackson or lone -- planned date is Saturday July 23. The club is looking for antennas for Field Day. They go at it full bore, contest style. Member Ken, K6TA, is home recuperating from a hip/leg injury. Get well Ken. If you live in the Southern part of the Sacramento Valley and are interested in DX and contesting, then you should think about joining MLDCC. The club, again last year, won the California QSO Party (CQP), club competition with over 2,000,000 points.

ARRL: Several members sent me information on their long time membership, 50 years or more, but I lost the information when my computer went haywire. In checking the Section members list, I find that there were about 75 less members in January than in January 2004. This is a decrease of over 4 percent. Other sections had larger decreases. The League needs to retain it's membership (preferably increase the numbers), to maintain its ability to lobby the FCC, Congress and other Federal agencies in order to retain our frequencies and keep others from interfering with our frequencies, such as Broadband over the Power Line (BPL). If you renew your membership or join the ARRL, through me, I can give you a copy of the ARRL Repeater Directory.

MISC: Now that spring is near I will be getting out to visit more clubs. I am almost always available to visit or speak to the clubs, so put me on your schedule. Be sure that you check into the ARRL web pages several times a week and to check the Sacramento Valley Section News. I do make changes to it once in awhile during the month. Most ARRL forms and booklets can be found on the thousands of League pages. Try www.arrl.org The SV section Net meets on the second Wednesday of the month, at 7 PM on 146.085 [+ PL 127.3] and at 7:30 PM on 3987 KHz.

73,

Jettie W6RFF
SV Section Manager

ARES

Reported by Joe Park, WB6AGR, Placer Co. EC

First off, thanks to those who have been checking into the Wed. HF ARES net. I will begin calling for any check-ins to the HF net on 2m about 7:25 PM. The HF net is called the WINCO net (WA, ID, NV, CA, OR). for Emergency Communications Operators. If you have an HF receiver to copy SSB on 3987 KHz, listen in at 7:30 PM.

I will be leaving Fri. morning to go to Mt Shasta to help out with the ARC Comm. Van for the 135 mile Dog Sled Race. Will be coming home on Sunday and should get here in time for the ARES Net.

Hopefully you all responded to Bob's (KF6BQG) request to draft a message in response to his last weeks training and send it to him.

I went up to the OES office in Auburn with Kevin, K6KWD, to scope out the site for the VHF and HF antennas. It looks like we should be able to get a station up there, and also up at their office at Tahoe City before the year is out.

We have been having a good turn out on our Sunday night net. Keep it up.

73,

Joe, WB6AGR
Placer Co EC

This Space Available

Actually, this space and possibly 2 more pages! Thanks to Casey, Paul, Greg, and Jettie for their inputs. Ordinarily, I'd try to conjure up something to even out the issue ... whitespace is so unprofessional to journalists, amateur or otherwise. I wasn't able to make contact for a Member of the Month piece, so that will become The Member of 'This' Month -- an occasional contribution.

For those who are on the email list, who have HF privileges, and who do CW, Andrea and I will be in Tucson from 3/3 to 3/8 for the Annual Cactus Intertie meeting and some sightseeing. On Fri, 3/4, she will be scouting out needlework shops (needlework turns out to be as expensive a hobby as ham radio, and we agreed long ago to an Equal Hobby Allowance policy, so it's been good for me!). So, on Fri, I will be at poolside at the hotel with my KX1 (3.5W) on 20, 30, and maybe 40 in the later afternoon. I have a new Nikon digital camera, and I'm hoping to work up something in the way of a QSL certificate with a cool photo. It'll be called the "WAPSIT" award for Worked All Poolside Stations In Tucson.

If you can get on, I'll be around 14050 and 10115 KHz most of the day and possibly 7040 KHz later as well. I might make it into the Spartan Sprint on Monday evening if we get back from Tombstone early enough.

Those not on the email list probably won't get this in time to get the certificate. That's a small flog for signing up for email delivery and help out the club financially. You also get full color photos and active email addresses and URLs.

73, and beware the Ides,

Fred, K6DGW



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Associate Name: _____ Call: _____ Class: _____

Phone Number: _____ Application: (Circle One) New Renewal

Member Dues: Circle Amounts That Apply.

Applications received in the middle of the year will be pro rated. Contact the President or Treasurer for exact rate.

Membership:	\$22.00	Name Badge:	\$7.00
Associate:	\$ 7.00	Repeater Donation:	\$ _____
Auto Patch Donation:	\$ _____	Newsletter Booster:	\$ _____
Miscellaneous Donation:	\$ _____	Christmas Donation:	\$ _____
Worldradio Renewal:	\$ _____	TOTAL:	\$ _____

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