

Sierra Signals

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

<http://sf-arc.org>

August 2005

P.O. Box 1005, Newcastle, CA 95658

The Old Man Isn't Talking and Boy Am I Ticked!

(Reported by Casey, W7IB)

I haven't channeled HPM lately and it suddenly occurred to me that the Old Man isn't talking. What led me to this assumption? Look at us, look at how we are in 2005 and look at how we are regularly manipulated... why would he want to communicate with us?

I think the events of the last several years, wherein we have fought serious and personal battles amongst ourselves, and the animosity built up amongst us, and the distinct lack of leadership from *anywhere* has left us a hollow shell of what amateur radio once was. We, as a group, have turned into a mass of whiney, self-centered malcontents that can't see the value of anything, and don't seem to care much about the costs that we pay. The code vs. no code arguments that appear to have been recently settled by the bureaucracy we call the FCC is only a symptom of a greater problem (btw, they not only settle things to meet their own requirements, they largely ignored all of ours – but maybe you'll be able to see that, if you really think about it!)

At the Key of S.F.A.R.C.

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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

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

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We as a group, are treated in the “real world” like an anomaly or an aberration, something to be humored, and then maybe it will go away. The public service sector, which we have so faithfully served since our organization early in the last century, takes a position that we are a troublesome, but useful source of labor, *when* they need us. After all, the amateur community is a clear source of reasonably intelligent people who can be called upon and used to direct traffic, count bodies, keep records, run errands, etc. In their arrogance, they see us as minions to push around, when appropriate, like pawns on a chessboard. *(continued on page 2)*

2005 Calendar of Events

(Operating Events in Italics)

[Dates are local unless otherwise indicated]

Aug 6	<i>No. Am. QSO Party (CW)</i>
Aug 12	Regular Meeting
Aug 12-14	<i>Worked All Europe DX (CW)</i>
Aug 20	<i>No. Am. QSO Party (SSB)</i>
Aug 27	Club Breakfast
Sep 9	Regular Meeting
Sep 24	Club Breakfast

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Forty Years Ago At The SFARC

(Reported by Gary, KQ6RT)

August 13, 1965

President Sage Otow opened the meeting at 2030 with 7 members and~1 visitor in attendance. The previous minutes were read and approved

A letter of resignation from Ken Weger was read.

The secretary reported sending a sympathy card to Bill Tracy upon the death of his father. He was instructed to send one to Mrs. Otto Draper as Otto had been a member of the club.

There are 13 paid up active members at the present time.

Our trailer was once again discussed. Jack and Les offered to help with it this next Saturday. Clay made a motion to ask Joe about giving us a price for finishing and painting the trailer.— Jack seconded it and the motion was passed.

It was suggested that we try changing the time of our Sunday Net from 0900 to 1300, so we will do so and see how it works out.

The meeting was adjourned at 2130.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard H Lund, WA6HYO

73,

Gary, KQ6RT

Old Man

(Continued from front page)

Some of these agencies even see us as a tool to gather public funds for their “communications needs”. More and more, we find less and less that we do for these agencies has anything to do with radio communication.

Then there are the manufacturers of “radio” equipment, many of them offshore. We all know who they are, the I’s, the K’s, and the Y’s and we all know in our “heart of hearts” what they want ... our \$\$\$’s! I’m really struck by the hypocrisy of “I” for their “For the Love of Amateur Radio” campaign – shouldn’t it read “For the Love of the US Amateur’s Dollars!” There is no wrong in the desire to make money, we all share in that motivation for whatever the reason, but let’s call it what it is, the development of a mindset of consumption and self-obsolence that has us all be conspicuous consumers. This is almost the definition of high-powered marketing! Now, back

to the code/no-code issue: it takes very little computer technology and surface mount hardware (\$\$’s) to build a CW rig that will consistently work stations many miles away, even in the worst of band conditions, but that won’t line the pockets of the big-3 offshore radio manufacturers. Here’s something to think about: isn’t it in the best interests of these companies to lobby the FCC and even the Congress, and to pay huge advertising dollars to the amateur radio press (all you have to do is look at the covers of QST, World Radio, et al to see this) to keep the constant flow of dollars in play.

I remember when most of us could put our heads together and not only determine the cause of a radio problem, but we could jointly or individually repair it! A radio lasted for as long as the parts and knowledge were available. Along the same line, whatever happened to the “back yard mechanic” that could isolate a problem, and then fix it without the aid of some computer-driven diagnostic tool? I believe that both of these went in the same direction, driven by well-tuned marketing departments!

The issues that adversely affect amateur radio aren’t really all that complicated. They all revolve around our own self-centeredness that has us not see the value of *one-mind*, even in the complex world of amateur radio. It is this market driven market-drive of manufacturers for money through introduction, and use, of questionably valuable “features,” that keep us in the game of one-upsmanship. That, in combination with the survival instincts of otherwise valuable associations, publications and governing agencies has amateur radio in what I perceive as a death spiral. The death spiral will continue for several years until we finally die off and go away, and all of it will be fueled by high quality propaganda, herein referred to as marketing.

I have more thoughts and observations about this, but I’ll wait and see if I can stimulate Old HPM to send his channel my way again soon. If you have any thoughts, whether you agree or not, write them and send the article to the editor for inclusion in the next issue – the newsletter needs the content, and all of us need to express our opinions about amateur radio in this type of forum.

One or two final thoughts:

1 – Never refer to ham radio as a hobby in front of served agencies, it has them see us, and the services we can of providing, as trivial (!), and

2 – think of us (and you) as valuable, not profitable!

‘til next time 73 (and 72 where appropriate) de W7IB & Oscar
the 7 ½ wpm Dachshund

National Ham News

Thanks, ARRL Bulletins and Letter

Customized E-News from the FCC

FCC PROPOSES DROPPING MORSE CODE REQUIREMENT

The FCC has proposed dropping the 5 WPM Morse code element as a requirement to obtain an Amateur Radio license of any class. The Commission included the provision in a July 19 Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order (NPRM&O) in WT Docket 05-235, but it declined to go along with any other proposed changes to Amateur Service licensing rules or operating privileges. Dropping the Morse code requirement or any other changes to Part 97 would not become final until the Commission gathers additional public comments, formally adopts any new rules and concludes the proceeding with a Report and Order specifying the changes and an effective date. That's not likely to happen for several months.

"Based upon the petitions and comments, we propose to amend our amateur service rules to eliminate the requirement that individuals pass a telegraphy examination in order to qualify for any amateur radio operator license," the FCC said. The NPRM&O consolidated 18 petitions for rule making from the amateur community. Several petitioners simply asked the FCC to drop the Morse requirement, but some--including the ARRL--also proposed a wide range of additional changes to the amateur rules. The FCC said the various petitions had attracted 6200 comments from the amateur community, which soon will have the opportunity to comment again--this time on what the FCC calls "our tentative conclusions" in its NPRM&O.

The Commission said it believes dropping the 5 WPM Morse examination would encourage more people to become Amateur Radio operators and would eliminate a requirement that's "now unnecessary" and may discourage current licensees from advancing their skills. It also said the change would "promote more efficient use" of amateur spectrum.

To support dropping the code requirement, the FCC cited changes in Article 25 of the international Radio Regulations adopted at World Radio Communication Conference 2003. WRC-03 deleted the Morse testing requirement for amateur applicants seeking HF privileges and left it up to individual countries to determine whether or not they want to mandate Morse testing. Several countries already have dropped their Morse requirements for HF access.

ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, said he was not surprised to see the FCC propose scrapping the code altogether, although the League and others had called for retaining the 5 WPM requirement for Amateur Extra class applicants. Sumner also expressed dismay that the FCC turned away proposals from the League and other petitioners to create a new entry-level Amateur Radio license class.

"We're disappointed that the Commission prefers to deny an opportunity to give Amateur Radio the restructuring it needs for the 21st century," he said. "It appears that the Commission is taking the easy road, but the easy road is seldom the right road."

Sumner said ARRL officials and the Board of Directors will closely study the 30-page NPRM&O and comment further once they've had an opportunity to consider the Commission's stated rationales for its proposals.

In 2004, the League called on the FCC to create a new entry-level license, reduce the number of actual license classes to three and drop the Morse code testing requirement for all classes except for Amateur Extra. Among other recommendations, the League asked the FCC to automatically upgrade Technician licensees to General and Advanced licensees to Amateur Extra. In this week's NPRM&O, the FCC said it was not persuaded such automatic upgrades were in the public interest.

The FCC said it did not believe a new entry-level license class was warranted because current Novice and Tech Plus licensees will easily be able to upgrade to General once the code requirement goes away. The Commission also said it already addressed some other issues petitioners raised in its "Phone Band Expansion" (or "Omnibus") NPRM in WT Docket 04-140.

The NPRM&O is on the FCC Web site <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-05-143A1.pdf> A 60-day period for the public to comment on the NPRM&O in WT 05-235 will begin once the notice appears in the Federal Register. Reply comments will be due within 75 days.

QSO Parties

(Reported by Fred, K6DGW)

The North American QSO Parties are a group of six contests each year sponsored by the National Contest Journal <www.ncjweb.com> Three (CW, SSB, RTTY) occur near the beginning of the year, and the other triad in mid-summer. We just finished the summer RTTY, and the CW and SSB are now coming up.

Each contest begins at 1800Z on a Saturday and ends at 0600Z on Sunday.

Here on the Left Coast, that means the winter contests begin on Saturday at 1000 PST and end at 2200 PST that same Saturday. The summer contests just move up an hour in local time (1100 PDT - 2300 PDT). As a single operator, you can operate a maximum of 10 or the 12 hours. KL7 counts as AK, KH6 as HI, KP2 as VI, and KP4 as PR. 8P and 6Y are part of North America too.

The exchange is simply a name and your state or province abbreviations.

There is no requirement that you use your given name. I've been working my way through my family's first and middle names, and am about half way through my grandkids now. In fact, there is no requirement to use a "regular" name at all. XE1MX is often "Loco," and in the just-completed RTTY, someone operating from Sugarloaf Mt on the east coast was "Loaf." Picking a name other than your given name also puts a

little wrinkle in it for the people you work whose logging program puts your real name up on the screen from a database.

The real fun in the contests are the multipliers which are the 50 states, 13 Canadian provinces, and the other NA countries and possessions, but here, you count them separately for each band. Thus, if you work a new multiplier in the middle of the day on 20, you ask him to QSY to 15 and maybe even 10 if it is open and work him there too.

The NAQP's are somewhat laid back, fun operating activities, and many people will only operate for a few hours. Power is limited to 100W so you're not competing with someone emulating the Voice of America, and there is a QRP class (<5W) as well. In the CW contests, code speeds will vary, but almost always, stations will match the speed of a caller, and there isn't a lot to copy anyway.

PCSat-2 launched on Shuttle

(Reported by Greg, KO6TH)

More than just the Shuttle was launched this past week when Discovery blasted into orbit. On board, among the supplies, experiments, and repair parts for the International Space Station, was a small package which contains Bob Bruninga, WB4APR's next generation PCSat.

The first PCSat was an experiment in digital communications and also a testbed for some new solar cell technology. The satellite was built by the Bob and the aerospace students at the US Naval Academy. Bob, as you might recognize, is the father of APRS, a widely used digital communications protocol based on standard amateur packet radio. His Prototype Communications Satellite (PCSat) is basically a set of radios, batteries, and solar cells, wrapped around a slightly modified Kantronics KPC-9612 TNC, and using the TNC as the main (only, really) management processor. The modifications to the TNC bring out a couple of input/output lines for use in controlling the spacecraft, using TNC commands. The whole thing is a cube measuring 10 inches on a side, not counting the antennas which were made from steel measuring tape (the kind you measure stuff with). By placing an APRS repeater in space, Bob and his students were able to expand the effectiveness of the APRS system, and give the students real hands-on experience building, launching, and operating an orbiting satellite. The satellite is still semi-operational; its batteries are very weak, but that one experimental solar panel on the +Z side puts out enough energy to run the bird when the orientation is good.

PCSat-2 shares objectives with its earlier sibling, to be a technology testbed as well as a bird for his students to operate and learn from. But instead of being an independently flying creature, PCSat-2 will be more of a space barnacle. The space station crew will attach it to the outside of the station during an upcoming spacewalk, and from there it will operate independently of the Station's systems, but carried along in orbit by the mother ship. Besides the radio equipment, PCSat2 will test some new high-tech solar cells, to see what effects are caused by the exposure to space.

PCSat-2 will have the expected APRS repeater function, but also is expected to provide PSK-31 and phone transceiver functions as well. It is hoped that the Station's crew will make use of it for communicating to those of us still here on the ground. More information about the new satellite is available on the web at: <http://web.usna.navy.mil/~bruninga/pcsat2.html>.

73s,

Greg KO6TH

Tevis – July 23, 2005



Hams hard at work in Foresthill. That's Kevin-K6TST on the left.



Foresthill again and that's our President – Casey-W7IB on the right.



Classic GMC with a REALLY BIG antenna! This was taken at Francisco's.



Still waiting for the first horse to come through Francisco's Rick - N6KLB.



Cathy Richardson and Fifi (winners of the Tevis Cup) at Francisco's.



Also at Francisco's – this guy was really glad he didn't have to go 100 miles!

For Sale

MFJ Tuner 422-D TS850-AT

CW and SSB Filters

Make offer

Contact John – KE6DK

(530) 367-3172 or (530)367-3819

KE6DK@aol.com
