

Sierra Signals

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

<http://sf-arc.org>

May 2007

P.O. Box 1005, Newcastle, CA 95658

The Never-Ending Saga of the California Call Letter Plates

(A true story by Casey McPartland, W7IB)

Almost exactly a year ago, maybe a little more, I went against the advice of many of my friends and colleagues and applied for call letter plates here in the good old Golden State. I've held two sets of call plates here in CA in the past and it *never* took longer than three months to get them. So what the heck?



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History: Gary, KQ6RT

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Contesting: Fred, K6DGW

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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

Gary Cunningham, KQ6RT

Joe Sylvia, KF6OQY

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I carefully went ahead and mailed (maybe a mistake?) my application, on the correct form, along with my check in the appropriate amount directly to the DMV in Sacramento. Once this was accomplished I set about waiting....

(continued on page 2)

2007 Calendar of Events

(Operating Events in Italics)

[Dates are local unless otherwise indicated]

May 5-6	<i>4th Call Area QSO Party</i>
May 5-6	<i>New England QSO Party</i>
May 11	Regular Meeting
May 12-13	<i>Mid-Atlantic QSO Party</i>
May 26-27	<i>CQ WPX(CW)</i>
May 26	Club Breakfast
Jun 8	Regular Meeting
Jun 23-24	<i>Field Day</i>
Jun 30	Club Breakfast

We encourage members to receive Sierra Signals via email to save the Club the cost of reproduction and mailing

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Forty Years Ago At The SFARC

(Reported by Gary, KQ6RT)

May 17, 1967

Bob, Sage, Carl, and I met at Memorial Hall, but we didn't have the key to get in, so we had an eyeball QSO outside. Then we regrouped at the Koffee Kup where Dick bought the Coffee. Not much enthusiasm in this club. Field Day and Trail ride coming up. Will see what develops.

73, Dick

Thirty Years Ago At The SFARC

May 6, 1967

SFARC held a Pot-Luck dinner at the Auburn Fairgrounds. Mailed SFARC News, Vol XIX, No.2.

73,

Gary, KQ6RT

The Never ending saga...

(Continued from front page)

About ten days went by and, sometime in May 2006, I received my "new" registration and the stickers for the new plates; I checked all of the information and determined that it was correct. "Man," I thought, "this is moving even better than I thought it would!" And so I waited, and waited, and waited until August when I decided that some action must be taken!

I called (on the land line) until I got a-hold of an individual in *department in Sacramento that actually handles these orders*. After I spent a few minutes explaining to the gentleman what a Ham Radio Call Letter plate is, he asked my for my name. (progress!) He then looked up the pending transaction and told me that they had no order showing for "W7IB" [at this point, please note that I had never mentioned my call sign to the guy!] He told me that he would have someone who handles these applications in *department in Sacramento that actually handles these orders* call me directly with in the next few days...

Three weeks later, (that's a few days in DMV customer service "talk") a nice woman from the *department in Sacramento that actually handles these orders* did in fact call me. She told me that apparently the order had been lost in processing, and that she would resubmit it and it would take about eight weeks! Hey, at this point I could live with it...

Long about February 2007, some twenty weeks after that call (again, CA DMV time) a set of plates arrived in my PO Box... I could hardly hold the excitement! Leslie and I resisted opening them and took them home. The first thing I did was pull out the updated registration and verify that *everything* was correct! So, I pulled the plates out and got ready to put the stickers on them, when it suddenly struck me that the plates said "W71B" (for those who might have troubles with numbers and letters, that's "Double-you Seventy One Bee'!) [Funny enough I had made a number of joking comments during the course of this venture about the license plate guy not being able to spell W7IB, but now it had come true!!!]

So, this time I carried the bad plates down to the local DMV office. After I spent a few minutes explaining to the nice lady what a Ham Radio Call Letter plate is, she poked the buttons on the computer and told me that the order had been filled and therefore was closed. I then went on to let her know that the order had in fact been "filled" – WRONG and showed her the plates vs. the registration. She agreed and actually called an individual in *the department in Sacramento that actually handles these orders*, while I was standing there. They then went into a lot of "DMV-speak" and finger-poking on the computer. She then told me that they were once again resubmitting the order, and expediting it (although she did tell me not to hold my breath on the expedite part, because *the department in Sacramento that actually handles these orders* is very busy, thank God I'm not!)

Well, that was a number of weeks ago, lots more than eight, and I'm still waiting! Yep, a year's gone by and a lot of things change in a year, for instance Leslie and I are planning to move back to Washington in the next few months – I wonder if the plates will be on the truck before then?

I'm not going to spend a lot of time mentioning that there is huge waste and redundancy in government, or the fact that organizations actually collect fees in advance of producing a useful product, then treat you like *you* might have screwed up. What I am going to mention is that call letter plates in the state of Washington only cost a \$5 one-time charge, and that I'm curious to see how badly they can screw it up for that amount! I guess I'll just have to wait and see.

Casey, W7IB

Contesting

(Reported by Fred, K6DGW)

Since Alan, our new VP/CC, is off to Swain's Island, Samoa, and maybe a few intermediate places handing out a hundred K or more QSO's [OK ... he had some help], and is likely to need some rest when he returns, I volunteered to flog the 7QP and WPX CW on his behalf. Rob also needs input to the JUG, so I'll inflict one more of my columns on everyone until Alan returns home.

May Contests: Here's a few of the more popular, as always, the complete list can be found on Bruce's page at www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/

7th Call Area QSO Party: 5 May 1300Z – 6 May 0700Z

www.7qp.org

New England QSO Party: 5 May 2000Z – 6 May 0500Z and 6 May 1300Z – 2400Z

www.neqp.org

Mid-Atlantic QSO Party: 12 May 1600Z – 13 May 0400Z

www.maqp.org

CQ WPX [CW]: 26 May 0000Z – 27 May 2359Z

www.cqwp.com

The QSO Party Conundrum: 21 April saw the Ontario QSO Party sponsored this time by CCO. The VE3's are big players in our CQP, and several of us decided to return the activity for them. Alas, we were there, the ionosphere was there [sort of], but almost no ON stations were there. I hope we didn't all get the wrong date. J The Michigan QSO Party was concurrent, and was much better attended by in-state stations, but the Ontario experience is all too common. "Activity breeds activity" is a common phrase, however its converse is equally true – "Non-activity, especially from the sponsoring group, breeds silent rigs."

I think the increase in the regional contests over the past several years is a good sign. Rich, NU6T, and I had a blast last year from Elko County NV in the first ever 7QP. He, Matt, WX5S, and Tom, K6EU, plan to light up Mineral County NV this year. We all enjoy casual operations, and the QSO Parties offer the opportunity, especially in the summer months when the larger contests are absent from the calendar. However they can be very frustrating when we out-of-staters have few people to work. And, the situation isn't helped when the in-staters get mult credit for all of their counties as well as the states and provinces, so they stick to the low frequency bands and work each other. Fortunately, our CQP does not fall into that trap

And SS News: By now, everyone in NCCC has surely heard the news that PVRC edged us out for the 2006 SS Gavel. The official results, posted to the ARRL Web recently, showed the top three to be:

CLUB	SCORE	LOGS
PVRC	20,585,820	290
NCCC	20,016,034	260
SMC	12,620,118	220

They bested us by 2.77%. PVRC managed an average of 70,986 pts/log while NCCC posted 76,985 pts/log and SMC did 57,364 pts/log. Our aggregate CW score was slightly better than PVRC, but in the end, it's the total score that counts, and PVRC's showing in the Phone and especially their higher number of logs carried the day for them.

Competition is what "The Sport of Amateur Radio" is all about, and the 2006 SS was a very hard fought battle between two very determined clubs. Dean and I have congratulated PVRC on their win, and likely other Ducks have as well. I would have liked to see us take the Gavel for yet another year, but I also enjoyed the competition. Discussion has already begun in several circles on how we might triumph this year. Considering that 8 more NCCC logs at our average points/log would have done it, or just 16 more small logs at half our average would have done it too, there does seem to be at least one thing we can attack. So, "Congratulations PVRC, you won fair and square. NCCC is still out here on the Western Frontier, however ... watch your back."

While on SS, I want to repeat my thanks as an officer last year and an NCCC member to our SS Organizing Crew. The level of effort expended, the creative ideas, and the organizational level were just super. I also noted that Jim, W6EU; Rick, N6XI; Bob, W6RGG; and Scott, W6CT posted CW error rates under 1.0%. I'm impressed and congratulations! I hope I didn't miss anyone, the full table is on the ARRL Web at www.arrl.org/contests/results/2006/sscw.pdf

Meetings: I finally managed to attend a meeting, two in fact. The Awards meeting in Mt. View was my first, other than a couple of joint MLDXCC/NCCC conflagrations in Jackson, and the elections meeting in San Jose was my second [Andrea strongly encouraged me to attend that one ... last year I did not and got elected J] I'm figuring this out, I managed to couple up both trips with other activities, one with my annual trek to spend a few days with my college roommate and the other with Andrea for some hobby purchases for her. Most of you know what that means for me! I think I'll work on making a few more, just getting faces with calls has really enhanced my NCCC experience.

Final Question: In the early days of ham radio, things were done in wavelength ... "600 meters," "200 meters and down" as an example. Somewhere we switched to frequency, and ten meters became "up" rather than "down." When did that occur? For me, in 1953 as a new Novice, ten meters was "up." It must have been before that.

73, and KB/D

Fred K6DGW

VP/CC Emeritus

April Meeting Minutes

(Reported by Leslie, K7NYE)

Minutes of the SFARC Board and General Meeting, April 13, 2007 at the Auburn, CA main library:

Board of Directors meeting began at 6:55 PM with quorum of officers in attendance. Officers attending included Club President, Don Hay, WB6LPJ, VP, Kevin Reid, K7TST, Treasurer George Simmons; KG6LSB, Secretary Leslie Nye, K7NYE; and Directors Birton Gilbert, N6UG, Wayne Stilwel, W6DT and Jim Griffith, KI6AZH. We also had a guest member attend, Rick Prime, K6TF.

New business discussed included the new Webmaster, Rick Prime K6TF and his efforts on helping the club by volunteering to update the SFARC website with accurate information on current membership, including club officers and directors. Rick also put together a club "blog" (web log) so members have a central place to go to and ask questions, commiserate with fellow club members or even post equipment to sell or to be purchased. The blog can be seen at www.sfarck6arr.wordpress.com. Other business discussed included giving one or two individual prizes for the Field Day drawing instead of a monetary prize. Don, WB6LPJ also addressed the ARRL membership discount and the board took a vote. It was agreed that any discount given by ARRL for club membership should be given back to the member as a stipend. The board meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

SFARC General Meeting Minutes:

7:30 PM Meeting brought to order by Club President, Don Hay, WB6LPJ. Meeting started with Pledge of Allegiance, Introduction of SFARC Board Members and introductions made of all club members and guests, total of 39 in attendance, including some guests; Officer reports were given by Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer; Committee reports made for ARES, ARRL and VE, as well as Satellite.

New Business Rick Prime, K6TF addressed the club and explained the new website under construction and the new club blog. Don Hay, WB6LPJ told the membership about the ARRL incentive- if a new member, they would receive \$15.00 off the membership fee and if a renewing member, \$2.00 of the ARRL fee would be given back. This was met with approval by majority of the membership present.

Presentation:

Rob Carpenter, WW6G gave a comprehensive presentation on PSK-31, a low-power digital communication mode. He talked about PSK-31 in detail, explaining clearly how it works, why it works and what makes it different from other forms of radio transmission. Rob also presented a PowerPoint presentation that clearly demonstrated to the audience how PSK-31 works, what it sounds like and then aptly described why this form of radio transmission is so enjoyable to so many. He answered questions from the audience and provided a live demonstration, to the delight of the audience.

Gene, KG6NYH held the monthly Drawing. Meeting was adjourned approximately 9:40PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Leslie, K7NYE

Secretary

My Adventures in New Jersey Floods

(Reported by Chris, KF6NFW)

Good morning to all back home,

As you may know Beth (KD7KFN), and myself (KF6NFW) have been deployed to New Jersey for the disaster operations. We have been here since the 19th of April, and have been busy non-stop. Beth is operating as an admin. assistant, in Headquarters located in Fairfield, NJ. and I am working the communications team as usual. I spent a week at Headquarters and then traveled to Somerset county which is the hardest area hit, to operate as the lead for communications, which encompasses, all aspects of electronics, ie: radio, cell phones, computers, satellite comm. etc...

While we have mostly enjoyed our stay here navigating a new state is challenging, especially when you can't make a left turn, and what the heck is a jug handle, actually it is what they use here to make a left turn, and U turn, except they are on the right side of the road, if it sounds confusing, trust it is!

As we get into our second week here, we are slowly winding down on the operation, and the lack of healthy sleep is starting to take its toll once again.

Well until next time, be safe, be smart, and enjoy life!

Chris Robinson

KF6NFW

Sacramento Valley Section Update

(Reprinted from ARRL Website-4/20/07)

For those of you planning to do some Spring antenna work this weekend (if rain doesn't hit) please be careful working under the trees. I've noticed that with all of the wind we've had recently that the cottonwoods and the pines may have some surprises to drop. At our place, the sugarpines are capable of producing cones near 2 feet in length - not something you want to get hit by!

VANITY LICENSE FEE UPDATE

On the ARRL home page there is a late breaking story regarding a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM), released on April 18th, that indicates that the FCC is proposing a reduction in the fees to apply for or renew a Vanity Call. The proposed decrease is in the range of 40%, lowering the fee to \$11.70 from \$20.80.

I know that some hams, including me, feel that there is no apparent reason to pay a fee for renewals, but this reduction will help the pocket book a bit. The full story is available on the home page.

SM POSITION

Since I sent out the notice to the Section that I am leaving the geography in the next few months to move to Washington state, I have spoken to a couple of you about running for Section Manager. To date, we have had one candidate submit a petition for the position. It's a great opportunity to serve the Sacramento Valley Section and to have an impact on ARRL operations in this section. Petitions and nominations are being accepted until June 8, 2007. If elected, the SM will officially take over on October 1st.

I also invite any others that may be interested in serving the Section to put together the signatures required to petition and run for election to this position. It's your opportunity to bring new thoughts and ideas to this important position!

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATORS

Emcomm West '07 is scheduled for the weekend of May 4-6 and is being held this year at the Atlantis Resort and Hotel in Reno. This ARRL sponsored event is a grand opportunity for emergency communicators from the entire area to get together and exchange ideas and good fellowship. The registration deadline is May 1st and full information is available at www.emcommwest.org.

This year's keynote speaker will be Allen Pitts, W1AGP, the ARRL Media and Public Relations Manager. There is a full program of presenters on Saturday and Sunday morning all culminating in the annual drawing of prizes at 12:30 until everything is gone. I hope to see you there!

NORTH HILLS RADIO CLUB

Before mentioning the Annual North Hills Swap meet I would like to congratulate this great organization on its 50th Anniversary celebrated at their April 17th meeting. Jettie Hill, W6RFF, was kind enough to represent the Section Manager and a big thanks to him for his assistance. The anniversary meeting saw 50 members, many of who were past officers, attend. This was a great moment for amateur radio in the Sacramento Valley.

The NHRC annual swap meet will be held on Sunday May 20 from 7am until noon. There is free parking and plenty of food a drink available for this heavily attended event and the cost for 2 tables is just \$10. Full information can be found at http://www.k6is.org/hamfest_07.pdf.

UHF REPEATERS

There has been significant buzz in the valley regarding interference to the USAF Pave Paws radar system at Beale Air Force Base. I have received email from a number of members in the valley inquiring about the "shut down" of amateur operation in the 420 to 450 MHz range. Amateurs are secondary users of this piece of the spectrum and must make every effort to avoid interference with US government users. Your ARRL Lab is actively working with the USAF and the FCC to determine where the interference is, and how best to

stem its effects hopefully avoiding any repeater shutdowns. A full review of the status of this mitigation effort can be found at: <http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2007/04/17/100/?nc=1>

Finally, I would like to get a report from any SV ARRL Member that is planning to attend the Dayton Hamvention on May 18, 19 and 20 so that we can provide a short recap from the attendee perspective in this forum.

Thanks for your attention, see you next month.

Best 73,

Casey



