

Sierra Signals

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

<http://sf-arc.org>

June 2006

P.O. Box 1005, Newcastle, CA 95658

Sunspot People

(Reported by Casey, W7IB)

I recently read an article in the [K9YA Telegraph](#) a newsletter I receive by email monthly (check it out, it's a fun read; find it at www.k9ya.org) about hams and the solar cycles. The author's premise was that we, as radio amateurs, are heavily influenced by the forces of nature, specifically the sun. I've been giving that concept some thought and have developed a couple of ideas that you might find interesting.

The solar cycles as we know them run about 33 years with peaks every 11 years or so - this factoid, in sync with empirical observations that I have made, brings me to some conclusions about our hobby.

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

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History: Gary, KQ6RT

Digital/VE: Rob, WW6G

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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

Casey McPartland, W7IB

EDITOR

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It has been mentioned over the years that the "kids" tend to have a short passionate engagement with ham radio, whether they get licensed or not, and then the passion leaves them until much later in their lives. Hmmmm, let's think about that for a few minutes: in my own life experience I originally got interested in ham radio around 1958-59, during the downhill side of one of the greatest sunspot cycles ever recorded. Then, after a few years, the fire went out and life got in the way for nearly 20 years until late 1976 when the bug again bit me, and another respectable sunspot cycle was peaking up.

(continued on page 2)

2006 Calendar of Events

(Operating Events in Italics)

[Dates are local unless otherwise indicated]

June 9	Regular Meeting
<i>June 10-11</i>	<i>ANARTS RTTY</i>
<i>June 17</i>	<i>Kids' Day</i>
<i>June 17-18</i>	<i>All Asian DX</i>
June 24	Club Breakfast
July 14	Regular Meeting
July 29	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)

June 15, 1966

1. Minutes read and approved.
2. Trail ride changes:
 - K6QKO Carl, Tahoe
 - K6TFD Frank, WB6BDJ Bob, Robinson Flat
 - WB6NSY Les Miller, WB6BDJ Owen Cooney, Michigan Bluff
 - Geno, Fred, Bob, Sage, and Dick, Fairgrounds
3. Field Day lined up. Geno, Chairman
4. Pay Jim Carman \$4.68 for transistors to repair club's HP-10 power supply. Moved and seconded, and to be paid as soon as we get a new treasurer.
5. Motion by Joe to combine secretary and treasurer and club pay the dues. Motion passed.
6. 8 members and 1 visitor present.
7. Closed for eats at 9:20

Frank Carman, Sec pro tem

73,

Gary, KQ6RT

Sunspot People

(Continued from front page)

I got licensed again and was quickly up to the vaunted Advanced ticket - coincidence or quirk of nature?

It's interesting to think that an entire segment of the world population lives their lives from peak-to-peak of the solar cycle. Even more interesting is that the most 11 year cycles the majority of us will see is six or seven, and only about two of the major 33 year variety. Many of us actually live our lives waiting for something that happens occasionally, and sometimes isn't that *great* when it does take place! There aren't that many things that humans can wait days for, much less years, and it gives me pause to think that hams are reborn every 11 years or so (putting me in the middle of my fifth "reincarnation" or recycle).

In the past we've talked about how we observe a large part of the ham population as fat old men, and to the casual observer, that seems to have some validity! But I like to think about us,

all of us, men and women alike, as a tribe that is magically renewed and made young again 6 or 7 times in a life span. Fat old hams may not become suddenly thin, but in a year or two as we move into the upswing of the next cycle keep your eyes open and see if the OM's and OL's don't suddenly have a new spring in their step and a glint in their eye. At the same time keep a lookout for the kids of "cycles past" as they return to the hobby like salmon to ancestral waters, perhaps dragging new kids with them.

Ain't it grand? It's the magic of ham radio, renewal, and the Sunspot People!

73s,

Casey W7IB

Contesting News

(Reported by Fred, K6DGW)

Selected Contests for June 2006

ANARTS RTTY: (10 Jun 0000Z – 11 Jun 2400Z)

All Asian DX: (17 Jun 0000Z – 18 Jun 2400Z)

Kids' Day: (17 Jun 1800Z – 17 Jun 2400Z [1100 – 1700 PDT])

NCCC Sprint (Every Thu, 1930-2000 PDT)
<www.ncccsprint.com>

Contest Comments

ANARTS: <www.qsl.net/anarts/> The Australian National Amateur Radio Teleprinter Society runs this contest annually. Activity tends to be pretty high, although the low solar numbers will depress activity a bit this year, of course. I used to avoid this contest because the log submittal requirements were pretty awful (separate logs by bands and very specific formatting) and often took longer than the time I actually spent operating. Apparently, word of this finally reached the Southern Hemisphere and they have come up with a far more standard submittal process. If you like RTTY, or want to exercise a new RTTY setup, this is a good time.

All Asian DX: <www.jarl.or.jp/English/4_Library/A-4-3_Contests/2006AA_Rule.htm> We here on the left-coast have a pretty good pipeline into the Pacific Rim despite the crummy solar conditions, and this can be a chance to pick up a few new ones from Asia. There will be a lot of activity, many JA's and Russians, and South East and South Asia are often represented strongly enough to be worked from CA. Be sure you have an active account with the 6th district QSL Bureau (ARRL 6th District QSL Bureau, PO Box 970, Fairfax CA 94978-0970) because you'll get a QSL from every JA you work!

Kids' Day: <www.arrl.org/ead/kd-rules.html> Kids' Day isn't really a contest, but it is a great deal of fun. Hams are encouraged to have one or more kids operate their station with the ham mentoring the kids and acting as the control operator. All the action is obviously on SSB, and the goal is to expose kids to ham radio. Even if you don't have an available (or

interested) kid, get on yourself and give those who are on contact. Be sure to QSL – getting a few cards is a big deal for the kids.

NCCC Sprint: <www.ncccsprint.com> We covered the NCCC Thursday Night Sprint (aka “NS”) last month, but as a reminder, activity takes place about 40 KHz above the bottom of the band. Bill, N6ZFO, is maintaining a “ladder competition from reported scores, and the final standings will be taken from your 9 best showings. After the Sprint, check into the NCCC Thursday Night Net on 3830 KHz and report the number of QSO’s and multipliers (States/Provinces) worked. I was elected Vice President and Contest Chair for NCCC (at a meeting I could not attend, but you probably knew that) and one of my duties is to call that net. It’s very informal. Just respond with your call, and we run down the list for everyone’s comments in round-table format

And, Speaking Of 3830: In the days BI (Before Internet), contesters would gather on 3830 KHz after major contests to show off their scores and discuss (aka “lie about”) their contesting skills and achievements, or make excuses for the lack thereof. Today, that forum exists on the web as well at <www.hornucopia.com/3830score/> where Bruce, WA7BNM, has automated the process. There are submittal forms for many of the popular contests, and you can review postings of other stations. If you can’t make the NCCC net following the Sprint, just go to Bruce’s page and you’ll find a form for “NS.” Fill it in with you stats and it will automatically be sent to Bill tallying on the ladder. You’ll also find the 13-month calendar of practically every contest in hamdom on Bruce’s site <www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/>.

Finally, 7QP: Rich, NU6T, and I had a great time in the 1st running of this regional contest in early May. Elko is about 7.5 hours from Auburn (8.5 going east, we had to get a new tire on the tent trailer in Fernley NV) however Rich is a biologist for CALTRANS and knows a lot about the flora and fauna of the Basin and Range, so I learned a lot on the drive. Were I younger, we’d have probably set up on a county line in the desert, however I decided I wanted a few amenities (like running water, electricity, and latrines), so we operated from the Double Dice RV Park. Rich is operating SSB in the first picture, and the second shows our campsite with the R8 antenna.

73,

Fred K6DGW

Ed note: Due to space limitations the pictures referred to in the above article could not be printed in the newsletter. They will be forwarded to our Webmaster for posting on the SFARC website.

May Meeting Minutes

(Reported by Leslie, K7NYE)

Minutes of the SFARC Board and General Meeting, May 12, 2006 at the Auburn, CA main library:

Board of Directors meeting began at 7:00 PM with quorum of officers in attendance. No new business was discussed, but old business was brought up for review. Mention was made of the

upcoming Field Day and preparations needed. Club brochure was discussed and will be completed by June meeting by Leslie, K7NYE and Wayne W6DT. The board talked about recent club volunteer efforts, specifically the two MS Walks and the upcoming Enduro event, which has been rescheduled from May 8th to June 4th. Joe, KF6OQY raised a question about a finding the results of a survey the club did years ago asking members about activities SFARC should participate in. Leslie brought up about concern about the lack of presenters for upcoming club meeting presentations and the need for members to volunteer to volunteer. George, KG6LSB mentioned that new name badges were now being made by a local company in Auburn for \$7.00 each and the time to get them made greatly reduced. Board meeting was adjourned at 7:16 PM.

SFARC General Meeting Minutes:

7:40 PM Meeting started by W7IB, President, Casey McPartland; Meeting started with Pledge of Allegiance, Introduction of SFARC Board Members and introductions were made of all club members and guests, total of 29 in attendance; Treasurer’s report was given, including mention of success of the club’s efforts at Rocklin and Auburn MS walks. Secretary’s report from last meeting was given; Committee reports were made. These included ARES, VE, Repeater and Satellite reports by the designated representatives. Jim, K6ARR said that the Voice ID’er is off on the K6ARR Repeater and was checking into that. Greg, KO6TH said that contact was received by a ham from the Voyager 1, at a distance of over 8 billion miles away. He said it takes over 13 hours at light speed for the signal to reach earth. ARRL report was not given due to lack of representative. Marianne, KA6EST gave a brief presentation on a test being run for the SOS sweep riders for the Tevis and Western States run. The test is to determine if APRS can be used in the American River canyon to help track the sweep riders as they do their job during these events. The test is being conducted May 17th and if successful, will mean that the sweep riders will be outfitted with a tiny tracker that will communicate with a digipeater, providing their exact coordinates on a computer.

New Business:

No new business was introduced.

Presentation:

W7IB, Casey provided a brief, but interesting discussion on the merits of etiquette and operating techniques of using the club repeater (and other repeaters). Proper form, protocols and etiquette were brought up including the correct way to key the mike, listen for feedback, how to self identify, as well as break into a conversation in progress. Basic techniques and comments about how to handle emergency traffic and calling CQ were also mentioned, along with call sign identification procedures. The club members added their comments and questions, with a lively discussion ensuing.

Gary, KQ6RT, held monthly Drawing. Meeting was adjourned approximately 9:20 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Leslie, K7NYE

Secretary

Who Will Predict the Chicken Little Event?

(Reported by Greg, KO6TH)

The sky is falling! The sky is falling! Well, not exactly. It's just an old spacesuit.

Sometime in the next few weeks or months, Suitsat will reenter the atmosphere and burn up. The exact date of this event has been the subject of wild speculation and prediction. So intense has been the interest in the old suit's demise that Amsat, the Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation, has sponsored a contest of a different sort than the ones we're used to: Pick the date of Suitsat's reentry. With a grand prize of a Certificate, this contest is clearly intended to be just for fun, but it does bring up the whole topic of orbital mechanics and other "rocket science" stuff.

It has been said that an object orbits the Earth by throwing itself at the ground and missing. Isaac Newton first described the mechanics of an orbit in his book *Principia* in 1686, and later diagrammed it in *A Treatise of the System of the World*. In it he imagined a cannon perched on top of a very tall mountain. The mountain, in fact, was so tall that it stood above the atmosphere, and anything shot out of the cannon would be unaffected by the wind or drag caused by it moving through the air. If the cannon were fired straight sideways, the cannon ball would fall in an arc, hitting the ground some distance away. A very weak cannon would drop its cannonball nearby. Stronger shots would follow a longer arc, dropping the ball farther away. Still stronger shots would go so far, he reasoned, that predicting the point of impact would need to consider the curvature of the Earth. If the cannonball was shot with a sufficient speed, the arc taken as the ball dropped would match the Earth's curve. This would return the cannonball to its point of firing, no doubt to the utter surprise of the poor guy who fired the cannon in the first place.

Predicting when an object will reenter the atmosphere is a tricky thing to do. Many forces are at work on an orbiting object, in addition to gravity. The very thin atmosphere acts against the object's forward motion, causing it to slow down. This lowers the orbit slightly, which puts the object into a slightly thicker part of the atmosphere. Solar wind and the Sun's radiation also play a role, as does the fact that the Earth isn't exactly round, nor is it of even composition. An object with a large surface area will be slowed more than one of smaller dimensions or higher mass, and something like a spacesuit will have less drag if it is moving head-first, more if it is attempting a cosmic belly flop. This is why the International Space Station needs to periodically fire its engines to stay in orbit. Its large profile causes a good bit of orbital drag, and it too would eventually reenter the atmosphere if its momentum were not maintained.

Still, predictions can be made. Masa, JN1GKZ, has plotted the orbit of Suitsat since its launch back in early February. His graph can be found at: <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/m->

[ara/gkz/satinfo/suitsat-1e.htm](http://www.ne.jp/asahi/m-ara/gkz/satinfo/suitsat-1e.htm) . Interestingly, a small part of the suit became detached early in the mission, and was tracked separately as "Suitsat Debris". That item, probably a glove or something similar, reentered on March 20th. As of May 25th, Suitsat had decayed from its original 355km orbit down to 320km, in the 3 ½ months since launch.

AMSAT's contest can be found on the AMSAT website at <http://www.amsat.org/amsat-new/news/> . From there, follow the link to the "Chicken Little Contest". You will be asked to pick a date, and enter your name and email address so you can be contacted when the contest is over. Based on Masa's graph and my own envelope-scratching, I've picked a date and entered. What date do you come up with?

73s, and good luck in the contest,

Greg KO6TH

4S7DA-A Long-Delayed QSL

(Reported by Fred, K6DGW)

Many years ago -- actually 41 to be more exact -- I had the opportunity to operate legally from Thailand for about 5-weeks. I was a 1st Lt in the USAF at the time, commanding a combat communications team in the two Vietnams and Laos. We had been running airborne missions, mainly in North Vietnam, for several months when we received orders to go to Thailand, pick up some mobile troposcatter equipment at Don Maung Airport (now Bangkok International), and install it at Korat, a provincial capital in the center of the country. We saw the mission as a gift from our Group Commander to give us a break from the war because Thailand in mid-1965 was as close to paradise as you could get.

The equipment involved about a dozen semi-trailer vans, trailer-mounted 30 ft dish antennas, and a lot of tractors to pull it all. As my troops were getting it staged and ready to convoy, I contacted the US Military Assistance Group to arrange for fuel and other support. While there, the chief of the signals section, a Colonel who was a ham and knew I was said, "If you'd be interested in operating from Korat, I can get you a license." I needed to give that some thought, and I did ... for about 3 microseconds ... and said "I would like that, Sir," to which he said, "OK, pick a call, I'll call the P&T Ministry." Put on the spot like that, I didn't think of the CW impacts, and just said, "How about 'FJ'?" We ran our convoy, began setup, and about a week later, a telegram arrived authorizing me to operate under the general terms of my US license using the call HS1FJ. I had written home immediately and asked my Dad to send me my bug and home brew keyer. They arrived a couple of weeks later, just as we were completing setup of our "real USAF gear," and I began to have some time.

We communicated with our Group HQ in the Philippines via HF using KWM-2A's and we always had a spare or two. The maintenance troops at the depot just left the ham band crystals in them, so I tuned one of the dipoles to 20m, and became DX in the evenings. It was overwhelming at first, what with the entire eastern hemisphere calling me, but I got better. I had

never heard Russians, Indians, and Indonesians at 30 over S9. I drew up a QSL design, and, because 99% of the Thais learned very good English in school, and I had learned a little poor Thai, I managed to get a print shop downtown to make me a stack of QSL's. I gave my younger brother's call (WA6QJY) as QSL manager, and had a blast. Something around 700 QSO's in five weeks.

It all ended with a call from our Commander to turn the site over to some Signal Corps troops, go to Da Nang, and start a new airborne mission. I sent the stack of cards and my logs home, and we went back to war. Incidentally, I never saw my keyer and bug again. My guys and I would remain in Vietnam until the very end of 1967, and I would marry Andrea when I got home. My Mom said they had taken care of answering the QSL cards that came to my brother, and I pretty much forgot about it all what with new wife, making a couple of kids, and all.

Around mid-May of this year, I happened to hit the LoTW site, and was surprised that I was fairly close to DXCC (after 53 years, one would think I would be, no?). Wondering if maybe the on-line QSL's plus the other cards I had somewhere might not add up to more than 100 countries, I began searching for my stack of paper QSL cards. I finally found them (not quite enough but very close) in an ancient moving box in an upstairs closet. The cards to HS1FJ were also there – a hefty stack since HS was pretty rare then. Seven of them had a paper clip and a note from my Mom ... "We ran out of your cards and couldn't answer these seven." They consisted of OK1ADM (Czechoslovakia then), YO2BI (Rumanian People's Republic then), 2 JA's, 4S7DA (Ceylon, then), and two SWLs.

This was 41 years ago when I was 25. I'm still alive -- I began to wonder if any of these guys were too. I tried the JA calls in Google, and got log entries in other people's logs for them from several years ago, so off went an email to those guys asking for their help. I did likewise with the Czech and the YO. A lot of sleuthing on the web led me to the Radio Society of Sri Lanka (RSSL) and a contact for the 4S. I drew total blanks on the SWLs.

As I write this, I've had two responses. Costi, YO2BI, died in 2001, however my contact tells me his son is an active ham and might like a delayed QSL. I await the son's address. I received two replies from my post to the RSSL forum on Yahoo Groups, and Denver, 4S7DA is very much alive and would very much like a QSL. I haven't heard from the JARL or OK contacts yet.

Since I no longer have my HS1FJ cards (they were sort of cool ... English on one side, Thai transliteration on the other), I made up a card for Denver in PowerPoint. The background picture is looking through the door of the Jamesway B-2 building at our troposcatter site where I set up the station. My bug is on the right of the KWM-2A and my keyer is the aluminum box on the far right. There's a mic on the desk, but I never made it to SSB. The lower left inset picture was taken on the catwalk of the control tower at the airfield at Korat. My hat says "First Mobile." Our Group was the 1st Mobile Communications Group, known as the "1st MOB." They later renamed us the "1st Combat Comm Group," but "1st MOB" was just too great a nickname to give up, and that's how we were

known, at least until I came home. The inset on the right was taken late last year (well ... you probably figured that out, he's old!)

There's another packed box in the attic. It says "kids stuff," but it isn't my or Andrea's handwriting. I'm wondering if it might have come from my folks' place when they moved and "kids" refers to me and my brother. It's coming down next. Not sure who's unanswered QSL might be in there.

73,

Fred K6DGW

Ed note: Due to space limitations the pictures referred to in the above article could not be printed in the newsletter. They will be forwarded to our Webmaster for posting on the SFARC website.

Wanted

We are looking for a new Raffle Chairperson. Gary, KQ6RT, will be retiring from that position this year. He says he will be happy to help out the new person by passing along the things he has learned over the years. If you are interested please contact Gary email KQ6RT@sbcglobal.net or phone (916)663-4143.



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