NCDXC THE DXer

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX CLUB, INC., P O BOX 608, MENLO PARK, CA 94025

NOVEMBER 1977 VOL. XXXI, NR. 4 REPEATER WR6ACZ 147.96 IN, 147.36 OUT

MEETING NOTICE

PLACE: BLUE DOLPHIN Restaurant, San Leandro Marina

Directions: from Hiway 17 turn off on Marina Blvd WEST to Marina

DATE: FRIDAY, 11 NOV 77

TIME: 6:30PM Coctails, 7:30PM SHARP is Chow Time

MENU: Entree is Roast Beef at $8.00

AGENDA: Business meeting will be followed by Presentation given by:

JOHN DOREMUS, WØAW
"LET'S TALK ABOUT PROPAGATION"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1) International DX Convention moved from Fresno to Visalia for 1978. The QTH is the HOLIDAY INN in Visalia, and the date is for April 21-23.

2) CQ WW CW DX Contest - 26-27 NOV. Another BIG one!

3) Japan Trip by NCDXC - still in planning stage, for NOV 78, by K6SSJ & W6FOJ.

4) More 2-letter calls arriving: N6WR = W6AJY, N6NP = K6IXS, WA6EYK = N6VF.

5) We have 2 new SCM's in the area - Bob, W6RGG for the East Bay, and Mark, WB6NHF for S.F. Section. Congratulations!

FROM OUR MEMBERS-

W6AED/7 - Charter Member, Bud, has QSY'd to Sandpoint Idaho with lotsa room for antennas.

W6DUB - Charter Member, Mario, though inactive enjoys reading the DXer.

K6UJS - Vern, been inactive due to QSY from San Bruno to Concord, anxious to get back on and start collecting QSLs again.

ex-W6KYT - and ex-W7UR is now W5DD in Texas. Bill plans to be on the air again very soon.

K6WR - Brad is coming back from Europe to stay - in Los Gatos hills. Due back in November.

CLIMBING THE DX LADDER

This is a contributor's column for ideas on how to help each other make DXing more enjoyable. Please send your bit (200 words or less) to the Editor, N6GG by the 20th of the month - or sooner - and you'll be on the list.

QSLING

You've just nailed another new one. Feels pretty good, huh! And now you can sit back and relax. Not quite. You probably want that guy's QSL to hang on the wall. But how to get it, and without it costing more than that six-pack you're now enjoying after fighting that pile-up. Most newcomers to DXing either send everything through the bureau or else direct. The first is slow and not always so reliable, and the second rather costly. Here are some guidelines to follow. For Europe and South America and such things as VK's, JA's, etc., the bureau is best. Considering all the political turmoil in Africa and some other places, direct is best since a country can become very rare very quickly! Also, ask if there is a QSL manager, as there often is, and usually in the U.S., which means 26¢ (with SASE), not a wad of IRC's. If not, and its a real rare one, throw in 4 or 5 IRC's. A good old greenback might not be bad either. Leave any callsigns off the envelope or else it'll make an obvious target to be stolen. And use all your sources. QSL info can be found in QST, CQ, WCDXB, on the NCDXC Net, and from other DXers. Good Hunting!

de WB6RIU

WHAT BAND?

As most DXers know, we've just passed the bottom of another sunspot cycle. For some time 20 has been poor and erratic, with 10 and 15 vertually dead. But conditions are improving. So where do you look? Always check 10 first. When it's open, 10 is a fabulous, exciting band, chock full of excitement. There aren't many "big gun" stations there and often little activity on a very good band. A quick check of 20 would now be in order. If it's open, then 15 may be also, so go to 15 and see. If 20 just opened, then wait awhile. 15 will be an hour behind, and 10 maybe another, maybe less. Scan 10 and 15 around 10PM during the spring and fall for long path openings into Europe and Asia. During the summer 20 will be open 24 hours a day, so there's always DX there. After you work Europe at 3AM, and Africa long path at 4AM on 20, you'll know what I mean. Those good days are returning. Be prepared!

de WB6RIU

PITCH TRAINING

Have you ever listened to a barbershop quartet and tried to mentally separate each of the 4 voices as they harmonize? It is excellent practice for training yourself to mentally switch your ears from one pitch to another. It's similar to looking at an optical illusion and forcing yourself to switch from one view to another as quickly as you can. The idea here is to be able to listen to 2 or 3, or even 4 CW signals in the passband of your receiver, and without touching a dial, mentally switch from one to the other. Try it sometime. This is great training for picking calls out of a pile-up, concentrating on one, to the exclusion of the rest.

de N6GG

DXPEDITIONS

Good news! Someone is finally going on a DXpedition to a country you've been waiting for for several years. How to prepare for it, and what to do when it comes on the air are the questions now going through your mind. First, you'll need 2 receivers. Your transceiver will do nicely to spot with. Put your best receiver on the DXpedition's frequency. Listen carefully for directions. Try to work them the first day or two, even if they'll be there a week. Generators and rigs conk out, often cutting DXpeditions short. Don't jump right in as soon as you hear them. Listen awhile and look for a pattern. Is the operator tuning up or down the band, and how fast? Is he working several stations on the same frequency? Does he favor one spot? Is he going by call areas? If you don't have a rock-crushing signal, try the ends of the band that the operator is tuning since most people will hang around the middle. Wait 'til he works a local, then zero-beat him and tail-end when he finishes. And watch yourself. Transmitting on the wrong sideband or on top of the DXpedition won't get you many new ones. Good Luck!

de WB6RIU

DX ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE 2 METER MACHINE

It seems as though every time a DX announcement is made on the 2 Meter Box, it is followed by at least one question: "What country was that?" - or - "What's his call?" - or - "What frequency?" etc.. Perhaps we need some standard procedure to help alleviate some of the confusion. Along with that there is the running problem of AGC with our 2 Meter receivers. Some of us have rigs with a slow AGC attack time and we miss the first word of an announcement, if there is not sufficient pause between when the mike button is pressed and talking starts. Also, some of us may be monitoring the Box and be away from the operating position at that moment - sufficient to miss the beginning of the announcement and hence ask for a repeat.

Most of this could be corrected by having an announcement procedure that is standardized. Perhaps we could start with, "I have a DX announcement" followed by the name of the country, then the call, and finally the frequency. Repeat it all once again, followed by your call. Consider also adding the signal report, band conditions, size of the pile-up, etc.. Any suggestions??

de N6GG

PILE-UPS

Probably your first introduction to DX was through a pile-up. At first it might seem like the Big Guns are the only ones who get through, but after some listening it appears that isn't always true. What you need is good reflexes and good timing. Follow directions, the DX station may be going by districts. And if there's a moment of silence, pop in your call. In all the confusion somebody won't hear their call and there will be a few seconds to get your call in before the DX station repeats it. If you don't have a big signal, see if you can get a friend with a better signal to get through and pass your call to the DXpedition. They usually will listen for you, particularly if told its a new country for you. And remember, a little courtesy and lots of listening may cost you a country once in awhile, but at least it won't lose you any friends.

de WB6RIU

GOOD GRIEF!

A PHYSICIST is a person who, with one foot in a bucket of boiling water, and the other on a bucket of ice, would say, "On the average, I'm comfortable."

de K6SSJ

CW DXING WITH THE TRANSCEIVER

Last month's DXer briefly touched on using a 2-position foot switch to enhance spotting (zero-beating) techniques for CW DXing. Having used a foot switch for spotting my transmitter VFO for over 30 years, the purchase of a Kenwood TS-820 transceiver presented a new challenge - that of zero-beating signals off the DX station's frequency(without using a remote VFO or separate receiver) Now, why do that? Because there's an old Axiom in CW DXing circles that says: "Your chances for raising DX in a pile-up are doubled when you transmit zero-beat with the last guy working the DX." Obviously, it makes a good starting point because you know for certain that the DX operator's receiver is tuned to just that spot. Your individual skill in knowing what to do next separates the men from the boys. (More about that in subsequent issues of the DXer).

Assuming that you have made the CW modification to your transceiver that permits CW operation using the SSB filter, (I use the DH push button to switch filters on the TS-820) the next step is to visualize the mechanics of zero-beating with a transceiver. The graphic diagram of FIG. 1 shows how a Kenwood TS-820 transceiver "looks" at 3 CW signals, Ⓐ, Ⓑ, and Ⓒ through the USB filter "window". The subsequent audio pitch frequencies are indicated at the left. On transmit the TS-820 would be zero-beat with Ⓐ (at 14050KHz) because it transmits 750 cycles <u>higher</u> in frequency than where the Dial Pointer is set. Since the CW sidetone pitch is internally set to 750 cycles, it is easy to set the Dial to zero-beat an incoming signal by enabling the sidetone and matching its pitch with that of the desired station.

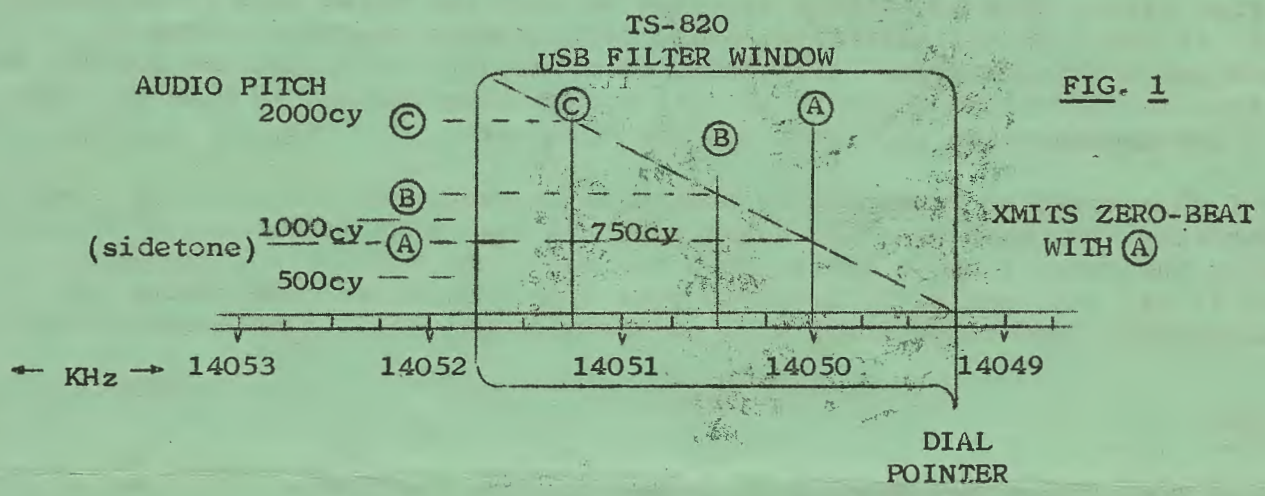

FIG. 1

Now, let's suppose that Ⓐ is a DX station, and he's working Ⓑ. You can zero-beat Ⓑ (matching the sidetone pitch to signal Ⓑ) by simply moving the tuning dial <u>UP</u> ½KHz. This will cause pitch of Ⓐ to drop to 250cycles, which is well within the receiver passband (window), as shown in FIG. 2.

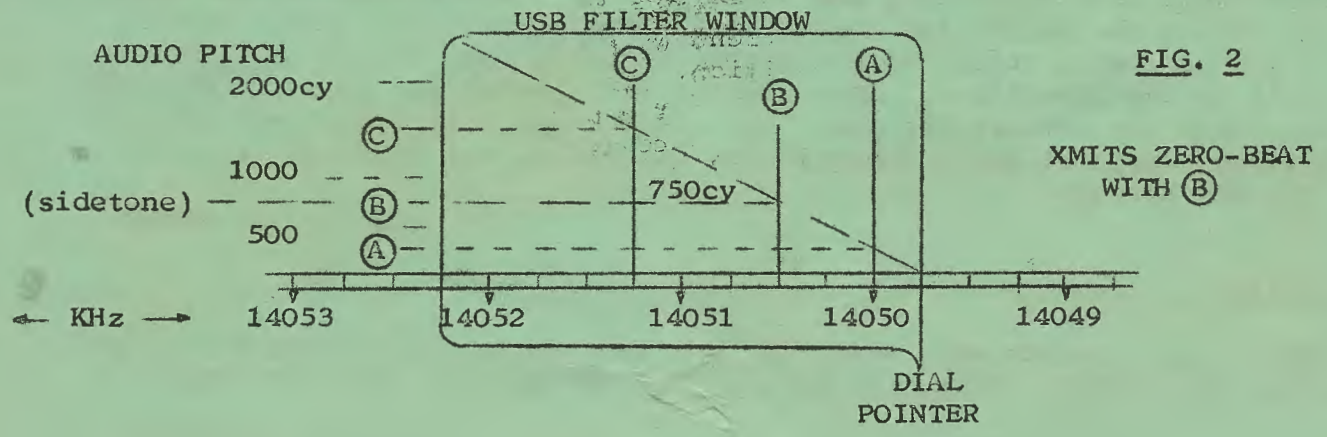

FIG. 2

SPLIT FREQUENCY OPERATION USING RIT

If DX station Ⓐ was working Ⓒ you could not zero-beat Ⓒ and still receive Ⓐ using this method because Ⓐ would end up out of the "window". You could, however, do it using the RIT control of your transceiver. Here's how it's done:

1) Starting with Ⓐ pitch at 750 cycles (Dial at 14049.25) engage RIT control and foot switch (for sidetone) and, using both hands tune the main dial and RIT together, keeping Ⓐ at the same pitch as the sidetone. Stop when Tuning Dial is 1.25KHz higher.

2) Turn off RIT and you are now listening to Ⓒ (Check sidetone to match)

3) Turn on RIT and you are listening to Ⓐ - the DX station.

4) Since RIT is disabled on transmit, you automatically transmit on Ⓒ frequency, and listen on Ⓐ frequency. See FIG 3.

NOTE: The USB filter has been used here for the illustration. The 500 cycle CW filter could be switched in when needed, and it will be needed in a pile-up!

This scheme will work to the limits of the RIT spread, which is + or - 3KHz on the TS-820. So - when the DX station announces, "UP 2", write down the last 2 digits of his indicated frequency, engage the RIT and sidetone, and move both the Tuning Dial and RIT together until you are up 2KHz. You will now be able to transmit 2KHz above his frequency and still receive on his.

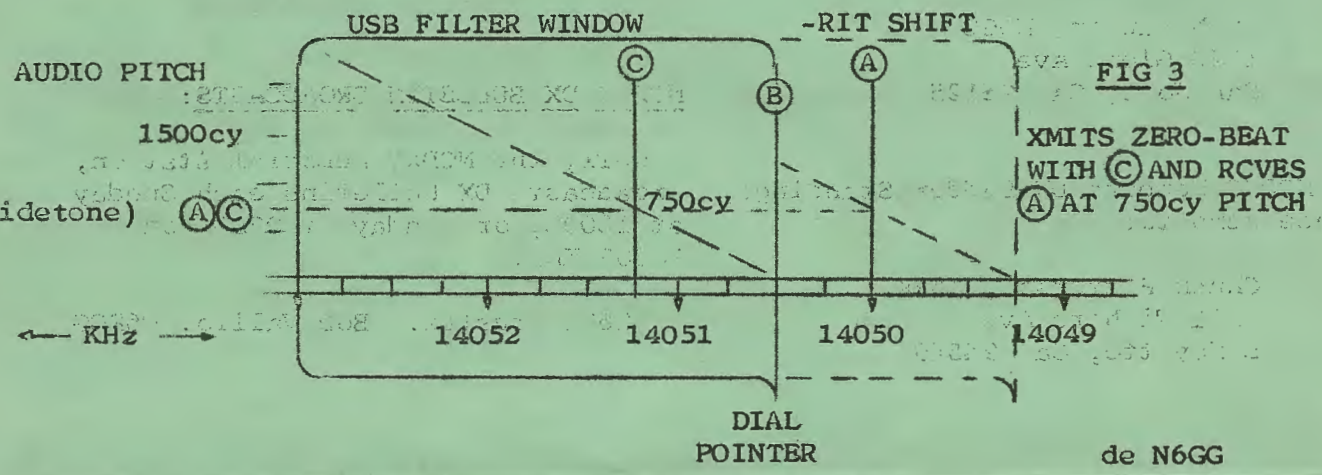

FIG 3

de N6GG

TUNING UP USING A DUMMY ANTENNA

We've all heard it - too many times - guys tuning up on the DX frequency. I wonder how many of us really believe that we can do this without interferring if we simply switch to a dummy antenna? Afterall, a dummy antenna can't radiate, can it? YOU BET IT CAN! The Heathkit Cantenna can, as its name implies Can-tenna, and so can vertually every other dummy load. If one considers the grounded transmitter to actually be at RF ground, then radiation from a dummy load and its coax will occur when the coax line feeding it is long in terms of a ¼ wavelength, unless that shielded (Ihope!) box or can is thoroughly grounded with a good ground, a ground rod, or even radials. The point here is to keep that coax feedline to the dummy load just as short as possible, and/or ground the dummy load thoroughly.

Incidently, when picking a frequency to tune up, please have the courtesy to not tune up on the DX frequency at all. Try to get off that frequency aways, and pick a QRM-free hole to do your thing. I tune up around 14198 or 14240 on 20M phone, and on CW at 14022 or 14040, plus or minus QRM. It all helps.

de N6GG

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX CLUB, INC., P.O. BOX 608, MENLO PARK, CA 94025

A non-profit amateur radio organization for the DX man. Founded in 1946.

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NCDXC REPEATER: WR6ACZ

Trustee: Charlie Kump, W6ZYC

Input freq = 147.96 MHz
Output freq= 147.36 MHz

Suggested Simplex = 147.54 MHz

NCDXC THURSDAY NITE NET:

On WR6ACZ each Thursday at 8:00 PM

NCDXC DX BULLETIN BROADCASTS:

W6TI, the NCDXC Memorial station, broadcasts DX bulletins each Sunday at 1800Z, or Monday at 0200Z on 14002 KHz.

W6TI Trustee: Bob Vallio, W6RGG

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