

W6ERS and W6GPB Silent Keys

DXer

N O R T H E R N
C A L I F O R N I A
D X C L U B



Vernon "Uncle Vern" Howard, W6ERS, 1913-1992

by James "Knock" Knochenhauer, K6ITL

(Also see the related story on page 9.)
Vernon Howard, W6ERS, died of a massive heart attack December 9, 1992.

The Mission High School Amateur Radio Club sparked Vern's interest in ham radio, and he received his first license in 1928.



W6ERS and friends at the HRO Christmas Party of 1989

He learned early in life that to do something right usually meant doing it yourself, so one evening, in anticipation of hearing and working some rare DX the next day, he set up four electrolytic "slop jars" on his father's workbench—to "form" overnight.

The next morning, when he surveyed the damage to the workbench, tools, and floor, he at last understood why they were called slop jars!

Sometime later an elderly ham who had guided Uncle Vern through the maze of ham radio offered him his old 60-foot tower—with the proviso that he disassemble it completely. Looking at what appeared to be a former PG&E transmission line tower, Uncle Vern gasped, but then agreed.

Over a period of weeks, he took the tower down, bolt by bolt and cross-member by cross-member. In his back yard, it grew slowly, twenty feet at a time. By the time he

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Joe Horvath, W6GPB

by Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD

Joe Horvath passed away early in November. He was 88 years old. His call is an original one dating back to the 1920s. Joe's tall tower, on the east side of the San Rafael viaduct, was a landmark noted by

Amateurs over the years and, though Joe was not as active in recent years as he once had been, he still operated during his final year.

Joe was a DXer—an early DXer who predated even the DXCC. In the 1920s, the

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Coming Soon:

- **4th annual NPSARC Winterfest:** January 16 at Monterey Peninsula College Armory, 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. Indoor flea market and outdoor tailgate market, demonstrations of ATV, Slow-Scan TV, Satellite, Packet, and MARS and ARES operations, vendor exhibits and more. Talk-in Frequency is 146.97(-). Contact Doug, KC3RL at 408/663-6117.
- **Livermore Swap Meet:** 1st Sunday of month, 7 A.M. to noon. Contact N7TVE.
- **International DX Convention:** April 16-18 at the Visalia Holiday Inn. Contact Knock, K6ITL at 415/345-9511.

January Meeting

The meeting begins at 7 P.M. on January 8 at Harry's Hoffbrau in Mountain View. Attitude adjustment starts at 6.

The program features Mark Murrel on southern China and Tibet. Chuck, AA6G, will present the 9BDXCC Awards for 1992.

N O R T H E R N
C A L I F O R N I A
D X C L U B

Club Officers:

President: Bob Artigo, KN6J
 Vice President: George Allan, WA6O
 Secretary: Garry Shapiro, NI6T
 Treasurer: Melissa Thomas, AA6TD
 Director: Dewey Churchill, KG6AM
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Club Repeater, W6TI/R, (147.36+)

Trustee: Bob Vallio, W6RGG
 Comm. Chairman: Ralph Hunt, AG6Q
 Club simplex: 147.54 (suggested)
 Thurs. Net QTR: 8 p.m. local time.
 Net Manager: Ralph Hunt, AG6Q
 DX News: Dave Pugatch, KI6WF
 Propagation: Al Lotze, W6RQ
 Contest News: Rich Hudgins, WX6M
 Westlink: Craig Smith, N6ITW
 Swap Shop: Ben Deovlet, W6FDU
 933 Robin Lane
 Campbell, CA, 95008
 408-374-0372

QSL Information: Mac McHenry, W6BSY

W6TI DX Bulletins:

W6TI Station Trustee Bob Vallio, W6RGG, transmits DX information at 2:00 zulu every Monday (Sunday evening local time) on both 7.016 and 14.002 MHz.

Club address: Box 608
 Menlo Park, CA
 94026-0608

The DXer is published Monthly by the Northern California DX Club and sent to all club members.

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General (Christmas Party) Meeting

The meeting was called to order December 11 by Bob, KN6J. Due to the unique nature of this meeting, business was kept to a minimum.

- KN6J, N6OXR, W6OTC, KE6FV, WU6A, KE6GG, and NI6T presented a slide show on their recent T32 trip.
- A first reading was held for Glenn, W6OTC.
- Door prizes were won by: K6MA (\$100 HRO gift certificate), W4RIM (Heil microphone and base), W6TEX and NW6P (each an Alinco DJ580T duobander).

Roster Changes and Corrections

New Addresses:

Hugh S. Phillips, KR7Y
 P.O. Box 472242
 Aurora, CO 80047-2242
 H: 303/751-3742

New Phone Numbers:

Bob Gobrick, WA6ERB and VE2DRB
 H: 514/441-7942
 W: 514/345-6533

Corrections:

Vincent E. Henley, KB6GV
 17990 Telfer Drive (not Telfer ROAD)
 Morgan Hill, CA 95037
 H: 408/779-2498
 W: 408/234-0672

QRN—Bane of Radio

by D.F. Rockey, W9SCH

Having just suffered a dose of Mother Nature's cure for ham radio fever, you know all about QRN. Like mosquitoes and poison ivy, it's an unavoidable part of summer.

But in the North we don't know QRN at its worst. Talk to an old-time sailor who worked the United Fruit run to Managua back in the days of spark if you want wild tales of QRN.

Imagine trying to copy WNU, in New Orleans, while static sparks jump from your catwhisker to its galena crystal. Not only were noise blankers far in the future, those crystal sets didn't even have a volume control!

That's why "Sparky" cursed, wrapped a towel around his head, and crawled under the operating bench. No one knows how many messages carried to a ship's bridge on such trips were a figment of the receiving operator's imagination.

During World War II, I spent summer nights trying to copy NSS at Annapolis through the rattle and roar on 17 kHz. I'll tell you—that was rough.

Lest you think "Old Thor" (the ancient Viking thunder god) can't make strong

signals, consider that Joseph Henry, for whom our unit of inductance is named, magnetized needles with QRN. He connected a wire to a tin roof, and another to ground, connected a coil between them, and placed sewing needles inside the coil. The needles were magnetized when the QRN-causing thunderstorm was 20 miles away.

Dr. Martin A. Uman, in his book *Lightning*, reports measuring 100,000 micro-Volts-per-meter from strokes 6 miles away—more than a 50 KW AM station develops at the same distance.

Nearby lightning strikes produce loud pops in a receiver, but if the storm is that close, you should be off the air and your antennas should be grounded.

"Grinders" are the real troublemakers. Sounding "like a brick wall tumbling down" (De Groot), they can obscure all but the strongest signals. Grinders originate in storms 50 miles away (sometimes more).

John Reinartz, W1XAM, told of hearing QRN from the Caribbean while at the North Pole with the Admiral Byrd expedition.

from the September '92 "Five-Watter," the newsletter of the Michigan QRP Group—
 N4NCU Editor

QSL'ing Ex-YU Countries

by Jack Troster, W6ISQ

The biggest problem with the ex-YU's isn't working them; it's determining the QSL route. Addresses and routes have been published in various bulletins, but there is no center where DXers can go for the latest information. The problem offers a chance for NCDXC members to help each other.

If that ex-YU with a new callsign you just worked gave you an address or a QSL manager, please share it with other members. Send the information to Mac, W6BSY, via packet, the W6TI repeater, landline, or letter.

Mac plans to accumulate the routes and addresses and run a YU QSL exchange, for

all to use. Mac is using information published in bulletins too, so send him clippings if you subscribe to one he doesn't.

When you need a QSL route, ask Mac via packet or on W6TI during his QSL Information portion at the end of the Thursday night net.

Mac will also send the YU QSL Exchange information to the W6GO/K6HHD List.

Here is the latest bureau routing given by the ARRL Outgoing QSL Bureau:

YU1, YU6-YUØ:

Savez Radio Amatera Jugoslauije
Box 48
11001 Belgrad, Serbia

9A (old YU2—Croatia):

QSL Bureau HRS
Box 564
41000 Zagreb, Croatia

S5 (old YU3—Slovenia):

QSL Bureau ZRS
Box 180
61001 Ljubljana, Slovenia

The Outgoing Bureau advises not to send to the old Callbook listings for YU4 (Bosnia & Hercegovina) and YU5 (Macedonia) because there has been no confirmation that the old bureaus are still in operation.

If anyone has reliable information regarding either of these bureaus, please send it to W6BSY. The best advice meanwhile is to hold YU4 and YU5 cards.

ARRL and FCC Doings

by Charles P. McConnell, W6DPD

Club Callsigns Available Again

Legislation recently signed into law will allow special callsigns for military recreational Amateur Radio stations and for stations belonging to organizations qualified as non-profit by the Internal Revenue Service. Callsigns will be issued from a current block, perhaps group D. But hold onto your form 610B; the FCC isn't accepting applications yet.

ARRL or AARL?

The ARRL Board of Directors will consider a name change at its January meeting. I need to know your opinion. Please send me your QSL card, with your preference noted.

HF Digital Modes Proposal

The ARRL Digital Committee, meeting with representatives of the STA participants on September 26, worked out a proposal to allow unattended HF digital operations in specified portions of each Amateur band 160 through 10 meters. Two areas may cause problems: Between 10.130–10.150 MHz, Amateurs hold a secondary allocation and must not interfere with primary users. The second problem area is 7.100–7.120 MHz, which is in a Novice sub-band. If you are interested, please read page 96 of the November '92 QST and add your preference

on the digital proposal, on the QSL card you send me.

Amateur License Statistics Update

A September 30, 1992 news release by the FCC shows 580,806 licensed Amateur operators and 583,237 Amateur station licenses. Of the operators, 98,569 are Novices, 187,231 are Technicians, 124,727 are Generals, 109,537 are Advanced Class holders, and 60,692 are Extras.

So far in 1992, 48,984 new Amateurs have joined our ranks and 26,796 Amateurs have upgraded (not including those who went from Technician to Technician Plus). Thanks are due the clubs that sponsor training classes and Volunteer Examiner programs.

ARRL Instructor Awards

Now is the time to nominate your favorite Amateur Radio instructors for the annual Herb S. Brier Instructor of the Year Award and the ARRL Professional Teacher of the Year Award. The Brier award goes to a volunteer instructor and the Professional award to a paid teacher who incorporates Amateur Radio into his or her curriculum.

Send your nominations to your Section Manager before January 31—SM addresses are in every issue of QST.

Treasurer's Report

by Melissa Thomas, AA6TD

Checking Account Activity:

October 31 EOM Balance	\$6,809.59
Receipts	614.90
Expenditures	2,049.22
November 30 EOM Balance	\$5,375.27

Savings Account Activity:

Life Membership Fund:	
Eureka Bank CD 11/13/92	\$10,475.33
Eureka Bank 11/24/92	\$15,669.95
Repeater Fund:	\$2,070.36

Russian Postal Problems Persist

by Sanford K. Smith, N7PIB

The postal systems in several formerly Communist countries are chaotic. A local estimate in Russia has only 15 percent of the foreign mail being delivered, both inward- and outward-bound. Even the internal Russian mails are affected and the same is true, though to a lesser extent, in Albania. There, mail *not* to Tiranë seems to be okay.

I have received empty envelopes from Russian hams and have hand-carried QSLs into Russia to send them via local mail service. I'll continue tracking the return rates to see whether they improve over the ten percent I've experienced during the last two years.

from a letter to the NCDXF.

Shortening a 40-meter Beam

by Tom McShane, NW6P

A few years ago I took down my 2-element Hi-Gain 40m beam and replaced it with a 6-element Moseley dual-bander for 18 and 24 MHz. I mounted the WARC dual-bander at 62 feet, beneath a TH-7 at 70 feet.

As the sunspot activity declined, and 40 meters improved, I wanted to add my 40-meter beam to the top of the "stack." W6QHS's book, *Physical Design of Yagi Antennas*, convinced me (by chapter 4) that my mast was overloaded with two beams, much less three.

I decided to get a 20-foot chrome-molly mast with 3/8-inch walls (type 4130). The mast weighs 130 pounds and the alloy's tensile strength is over 75000 psi. Ham Radio Outlet's price was within a few dollars of the industrial tubing distributors I checked and HRO had the mast in stock, so I gave them my order.

Besides strengthening the mast, I wanted to reduce the turning radius of the 40-meter beam from 25 to 23 feet to avoid overhanging my neighbor's property. The simplest way to do this would be to push the elements tips in about 24 inches and add back enough aluminum wire—dropped straight down from the tips—to maintain the electrical length.

Garry, NI6T, compared a simple dipole made of 1-inch tubing to a shortened one with drooping #8 AWG aluminum wire restoring its length, using the K6STI version


The Orion-2300 A Rotator Endorsement

I'm more than pleased with the new Orion-2300 rotator I substituted for the old Taitwister, when I added the 40-meter beam to the "stack." The Taitwister did fine with just the TH-7 but was marginal with two beams and would have been wholly inadequate with three.

The workmanship, parts quality, and construction of the ORION-2300 are first rate and it turns and holds the three beams without a hitch.

of Mininec. He concluded the drooping wires would need to be half again as long as the length of tubing removed, so I used 36-inch drooping wires.

Garry and I put the beam on the mast, ran it up to 70 feet and measured 1:1 SWR at 7.063 MHz. We then added the TH-7 at 64 feet and Moseley WARC dual-bander at 58 feet, and measured the SWR again. The 1:1 frequency had fallen to 7.025 MHz and the SWR was 2:1 at 7.190 MHz. I seldom work 40-meter phone, so this result pleased me. I can always use an antenna tuner if I venture above 7.190 MHz.

The SWR graph shows the results. On the air, the beam works just like it did before the change. 

The Real Ham Story

(Well, one more theory, anyway. See the Nov. '92 DXer, page 4—ed.)

Back in the halcyon days of landline telegraphy, new telegraph operators always got the night shift, starting at midnight.

Non-urgent traffic was frequently marked HAM, for Handle After Midnight, and left for the rookies to handle. Among telegraphers, HAM became synonymous with trivia, such as today's Radio Amateurs usually discuss.

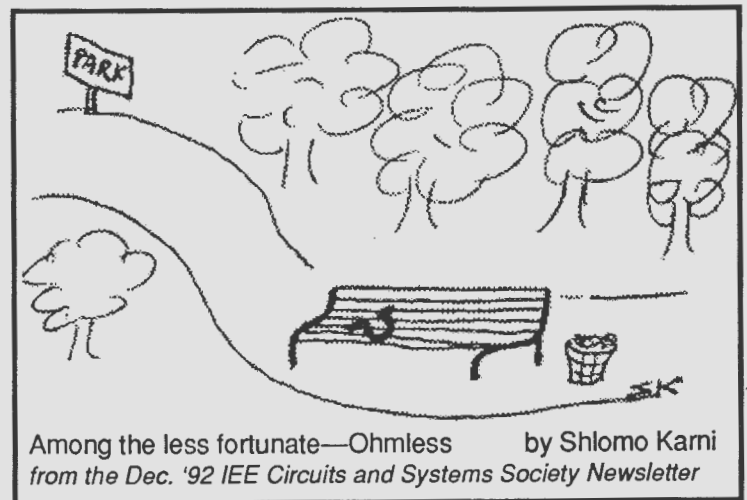
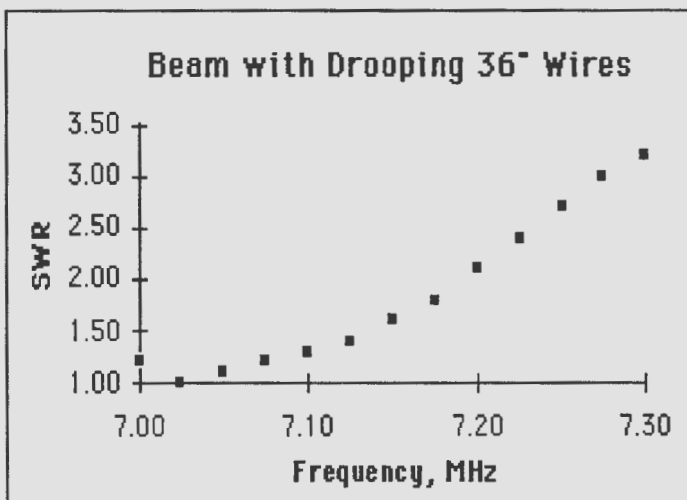
from the November '92 IBM ARC (Boca Raton, FL) newsletter 'WB4QNX'—N4PYB Editor

CD-Quality Broadcasting

The FCC will set aside spectrum for compact disk-quality radio broadcasting. Frequencies will be assigned in the 2310–2360 GHz range. Some government users will continue using the band until January, 1997, however.

An FCC staff person said new services will begin broadcasting late in the decade. Commissioner Sherrie Marshall expressed concern whether all necessary steps have been taken to move current occupiers of the band expeditiously. She termed the decision "a good item ... timely if not overdue."

from the November Penn Wireless Assn. 'X-Mitter'—Dave Heller, K3TX Editor



Uncle Vern Howard, W6ERS

continued from page 1

completed it, his neighbors wondered what kind of fertilizer PG&E used.

With this tower and a homemade "plumber's delight" yagi and multiple wires for the low bands, Uncle Vern became a major DXer in a time when DXing was a rare sport, even among hams.

Early in his life, Vern joined the San Francisco Radio Club, along with Harold "Hal" Godfrey, N6AN (then W6EYY), and Wilbur "Bip" Bachman, W6BIP. Through their ham radio fraternity, Uncle Vern and Bip became close friends—so much so that Vern was best man at Bip and Elsie's wedding.

During his formative years, Uncle Vern expanded his horizons by studying literature at UC Berkeley, where he graduated *summa cum laude* and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. During his college years, Vern worked as a bridge tender on the 3rd Street Southern Pacific Railroad bridge. Since he only had to open the bridge a few times per shift, the job gave him ample time to read the classics he loved. As a result, throughout his life Uncle Vern drew from a vast knowledge of the masters of literature for the proper quote to suit almost any occasion.

An avid outdoorsman, he hiked and climbed over much of the American West, but Vern particularly loved the Washington Cascades and Olympics mountain ranges. His preference for being outdoors led him to become a meter reader for the San Francisco Water Department and, over the years, he steadfastly refused promotions that would have put him inside the confines of an office.

Uncle Vern's dual loves—literature and mountains—led not surprisingly to his collection of books on mountaineering, which has been recognized as the one of the foremost references and resources on mountaineering in the United States, containing many extremely rare volumes. Uncle Vern himself was an authority on mountaineering.

After retiring from the Water Department, Uncle Vern opened a bookstore in Burlingame that specialized in finding, selling, and collecting sets of rare books. He also assembled complete sets of Amateur Radio magazines, including *QST*, *Radio*, and

CQ. Collectors and librarians alike called him for information and assistance.

Unnoticed by most customers, Uncle Vern hid a complete HF station under his cash register. That station included a dusty Drake L4B amplifier and a droopy 2-element quad about 20 feet above the roof. More than once, he waved off a flash of currency while he got his signal report. After all, he reasoned, a customer would probably come back another day, but the DX might not.

As Uncle Vern and DXing progressed together, Bud, W6WB—also in the San Francisco Section—always seemed to better him in the DX contests. So he moved to Burlingame, in the Santa Clara Valley Section, where he reigned supreme for many years—until the "really big" stations appeared on the air.

CW was Vern's first love and he held out to the last against "newfangled automatic senders" like memory keyers or computers, preferring his trusty old Vibroplex bug with 1/4-inch spacing. Uncle Vern sent by what he called the "slap method" and it wasn't unusual for his bug to move two feet during a QSO! But his Honor Roll status, where he appears with a 323/357 total, proves that his method worked. He also received early 5-Band DXCC, 5-Band WAZ, and had cards for over 100 countries on all WARC bands.

Uncle Vern announced his presence at conventions by artfully CQing on a wooden whistle. He was a rare sight, too, with his Tyrolean peaked hat. He appeared for the 1992 DX Convention banquet resplendent in full Tyrolean mountain outfit. (A late arriver at the hotel's registration desk, apparently noting his uniform, said, "See that my luggage gets to my room, will you Old Boy?")

Uncle Vern always had a pun or quip ready for any situation. On his way to or from one of his humanitarian visits, he opened on the repeater (W6TI/R) with, "What am I missing?" and closed after any remark with, "And I have spoken." Who among the repeater's users won't miss his stentorian and authoritative voice and his announcements and pronouncements?

After Ham Radio Outlet moved from Burlingame, he was the cement that held the

Tuesday Lunch Bunch together. For more than two years as many as sixteen DXers assembled—a group he termed the ALOOF bunch. After many weeks of mystery Hal, N6AN, decoded Uncle Vern's acronym: A Lot Of Old Fogies!

A member of NCDXC since 1960, Vern never wavered in his support of club activities and he never forgot his fellow ham. He was quick to call out the new one, the rare one, and the not-so-rare one, knowing some needed even the last.

When he relocated his station and tower from his bookstore to his home, a protracted and costly legal battle ensued with the city of Burlingame. When he was finally permitted to install his 51-foot tower and beam, he noted that it had cost \$1,000 per foot but that his successful battle would help others avoid the same situation. He hoped his experiences with the bureaucracy might serve as a lesson and as a precedent to others.

Always positive, Uncle Vern observed, "The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter, the distance shorter." He stated his approach to life as, "Never look back; you can't change what was. Instead, look to the future, where you can make changes."

A mystery remains: Why was he called "Uncle Vern"? Many have asked, but no one has supplied a satisfying answer.

Letters re Uncle Vern:

I will certainly miss Uncle Vern's cheerful "What am I missing?" on the 736 repeater. He didn't miss much in the way of DX and I'm certain we'll all miss him very much.

To paraphrase a famous American, "Old DXers never die, they just QSB."

73 de Jerry, W6PVE

Enclosed are some anecdotes about Uncle Vern that I was able to get from those who have known him for many years. There are many other stories, but these are the ones that came out of the woodwork. (The material Knock provided is on page 5—ed.)

Vy 73, Knock, K6ITL

Useful Tools For the DXer

by Jim Maxwell, W6CF

The following is a listing of reliable publications that give good value for the money. It isn't exclusive; other excellent publications and sources are available.

Bulletins and Magazines:

The DX Bulletin. Weekly DX bulletin. \$32.00/yr Second Class, \$42.00/yr First Class. Send SASE for sample to Box 50, Fulton, CA 95439.

QRZ DX. Weekly DX bulletin. \$36.00/yr First Class. Send SASE for sample to Box 832205, Richardson, TX 75083.

DX Magazine. Monthly DX magazine. \$15.00/yr. Box 50, Fulton, CA 95439.

NCJ. *The National Contest Journal*, the bimonthly ARRL contest magazine, covers subjects of interest to DXers as well as contesters. \$10.00/yr. ARRL, 225 Main St., Newington, CT 06111.

The W6GO/K6HHD List. Monthly directory of QSL managers and information. \$25.00/yr, and single copies are \$2.50. Write Box 700, Rio Linda, CA 95673.

The W6TI Bulletin. The Northern California DX Club sponsors this on-the-air bulletin each Sunday at 1800 PST on 7.015 and 14.002 MHz.

ARRL DX Bulletins. Late-breaking DX news from W1AW on phone, CW, RTTY, and packet. See *QST* for latest schedules.

DX Columns. *QST*, *CQ*, *73*, and *Worldradio* all publish monthly DX

columns. A great deal of useful information appears in these columns, but publication lead times make them a poor source of late-breaking news.

DX Spotting Nets:

DXPSN. The Northern California Packet DX Packet Spotting Net covers Northern California and Western Nevada. Connect to N6ST (Saratoga) on 146.595, K6LLK (Mountain View) on 144.950, or W6OAT (Redwood City) on 145.770 MHz.

W6TI/R: *The repeater of the Northern California DX Club.* W6TI/R—which operates on 147.36/96—is a closed, tone-access repeater, but many non-members listen. An on-the-air meeting, which includes a swap shop, happens each Thursday evening at 8.

Other DX Information Sources:

Books. Dozens on aspects of DXing range from travelogues to "how to" books. Two especially good ones: *The Complete DX'er* by Bob Locher, W9KNI (\$12.00), and *The DXCC Companion* by Jim Kearman, KR1S (\$6.00).

Specialized Publications. Other publications of use to the DXer include award directories, country lists, zone maps, and computer programs. Their publishers advertise regularly in the DX magazines and in some of the bulletins listed above. Local ham radio stores typically stock some of them too. You can obtain one especially useful item, the DXCC Countries List, from the ARRL for \$2.00, postpaid.

DX Nets. DX nets operate on regular schedules on 20-meter SSB and other bands. Listen for them.

QSL Bureaus:

Outgoing cards. ARRL members may send most cards via the ARRL Outgoing QSL Bureau at ARRL headquarters. Cost is \$2.00 per pound of cards. The ARRL DXCC Countries List, mentioned above, shows which countries the outgoing bureau handles. Private outgoing QSL services give more personalized service, but at a higher cost. Richard J. Moen, N7RO, 2935 Plymouth Dr., Bellingham, WA 98225 operates one. For more information, send Richard an SASE.

Incoming cards. Whether you're an ARRL member or not, you can send number 35 self-addressed envelopes with First Class postage affixed to the incoming ARRL QSL Bureau for your district—listed in the both the North America and DX Callbooks. (The Sixth District QSL Bureau address is: Box 1460, Sun Valley, CA 91352.)

Need more information?

Monitor the NCDXC repeater.

Use packet—the DX Packet Spotting Network.

Attend NCDXC meetings.

Talk to other DXers.

Attend the Visalia convention each April.

And finally, above all, get on the air, *listen*, then *operate!*



Heard on the Party Line

by Charlie Vorderberg, WØCCT

One OM lived in a town so small that after his tower fell in a windstorm, it was outside city limits.

In the same town, a woodpecker poked his head into a light pole and got an electric bill.

Democracy is government by amateurs, not Amateurs. All other forms of government are by rank amateurs.

We usually write this column after a hearty breakfast—Cream of Wit.

We went to the auction at a hamfest and got something for nodding.

Any OM with horse sense is capable of stable thinking.

These days, if you think twice before you "break" you'll never get into a QSO.

F8DX: "Pas de deux." WØCCT: "Dark meat or light?"

The human brain is a wonderful thing. It starts working in the morning and doesn't stop until you get to the ham license examiner.

Greater love hath no man than he who gives up his frequency during a band opening.

To get a dipole up an oak tree, you either have to climb a tree or wire an acorn.

Alimony is like making payments on a linear after its tubes go soft.

Highlights of the Upcoming DX Convention

The Changing World of DX or Where Goeth Thou Oh Mighty DXer?

by "Knock," K6ITL

How will DXing be different in the tenth decade of the twentieth century? What new techniques and technologies will change our favorite activity?

Remember when rotary spark rigs could turn the air blue for miles? Then came audions, followed by 45's. Anyone with a couple of bucks could get on the air and work stations 1,000 miles away. "Not fair," some cried. Then came the superheterodyne receiver, the VFO, and AM.

Soon "Donald Duck" SSB replaced "broadcast quality" AM. "Not fair," some said. Then we got 2-meter repeaters and sent DX spots to the multitude. "Not fair," cried those without a Heath "lunchbox," or a Gonset "gooneybird."

The "ricebox" soon made believers out of those within range of the new FM repeaters. And, you guessed it, some shouted, "No

fair." Then came remote links, packet spotting nets with multiple nodes, computer contesting—with automatic control of rig and the antennas. "Not fair," they said, "at least until I can get one of those things!"

VHF and UHF DXing? How about DXCC on 2 meters? ... on six meters? ... via moonbounce? ... satellite? No fair? Of course it's fair, but you gotta be curious enough to find out what's available, what it's good for, and how to use it.

You've worked 'em all and you're looking for a challenge? The next ten years will be as revolutionary as the past fifty. New modes, improved equipment, and ever-expanding technology are certainties.

Almost all communications technologies have met scorn, ridicule, and doubts about their usefulness to Amateur Radio at first. How will DXing be different in ten years than now? Come to the 44th International

DX Convention and hear the predictions of some of ham radio's best minds.

Registration will begin at noon on Friday, April 16, for the earlybirds. The opening ceremony is set for 4 p.m. and a special presentation on the history of DXCC follows. After that, you can loosen up at the DX Bulletin/NCDXC Hospitality Hour. Then dig into a live Western-style barbecue-in-the-park. You won't want to miss that!

We're planning a star-studded program all through the day on Saturday, followed by the HRO/NCDXC shindig at the pool patio and the world-class banquet at 7:30. A special program from 10 to 3:30 Saturday will show your "significant other" a good time too.

Special events will recognize DXers attending their first international DX convention. The convention presents opportunities to meet legendary DXers

Turn to Convention on page 8

Editor Makes It At Last

AF6S, learned in early December that the cards he had submitted in June finally put him over the top. His total, mixed, is 324—318 on the active list.

His currently active CW total of 311 still falls short of earning the CW Honor Roll membership he covets, however.

Cards accumulated with the call W7VJT, between 1954 and 1962 had been lost, and Dave had never applied for DXCC under that call, so the totals include only DX worked after August 1977, using WB6ZHH and his current callsign.

Antennas before 1984 were a small tribander at 60 feet and a modified 18-HV vertical for 80 and 40 meters. A 90-foot tower with a short log periodic, a rotating 40-meter dipole and an 80-meter inverted-vee, all installed in September 1987, ended another dormant period and accounted for recent additions to the totals.

A Scary Commute

by Garry Shapiro, N16T

One weekday morning, I was trundling to work behind the wheel of my M4—that's Mean Mobile Mountain-topping Machine, a venerable BMW, much in need of paint, stuffed with radio gear and festooned with antennas. Late as usual, I improved my time along Central Expressway by executing an adroit maneuver or two.

I have owned, loved and hated my M4 for twenty years. From it I have worked DXCC and then some—from freeways, parking garage roofs, overpasses, and mountain ridges. I have been stuck in ditches in the black of night, and snowed and sleeted upon during contests. Once, atop Loma Prieta, the wind blew the whip horizontal—and I could not work anyone!

The antenna complement that commuting morning included a slider-tuned whip ball and spring-mounted to the trunk, a large and unwieldy affair that swung out when I cornered. A pair of tethers kept it from decapitating unlucky pedestrians.

A large sedan followed me onto an arterial street. "You're paranoid," I thought. "You're not the only one going this way." But the sedan stayed behind when I made two more turns. I mentally replayed the commute. Had I cut this guy off? When I turned into the company parking lot, the sedan followed.

I entered the realm of sweaty palms and adrenalin, imagining a powerful body and a mind bent on violent vengeance. I crisscrossed the parking lot with the sedan attached to me as if by a rope.

Finally, I knew I had to face my destiny. I pulled into a parking space. The sedan stopped behind, blocking my escape. I unlatched my seatbelt, set my jaw, and leapt out to confront my tormentor.

The sedan's window rolled down in slow motion, as in a dream and a face appeared. "Say, is that an old Webster Bandspanner? I haven't seen one of those in years!"

That's how I met Ron, NG6X.



The Hobby That Almost Wasn't

by Henry Rogers, WA7YBS

Amateur Radio began when wireless developed and, in the early days, amateurs dominated the airwaves. The experimental nature of early wireless also meant amateurs possessed the most advanced wireless apparatus.

Even Guglielmo Marconi identified with amateurs and supported their efforts. He also credited much of the later advancements made on the high-frequency bands to amateur radio operators.

Before 1912 amateurs operated their spark transmitters whenever, wherever, and however they wished. The government required no licenses and didn't regulate the airwaves—not a problem until commercial wireless became practicable and profitable.

But when the Navy began using wireless, they and the commercial stations were appalled to find amateurs operating more advanced equipment and at higher power levels than they were.

Before 1906, syntony—or tuning—was rudimentary. Spark were so broad it was usually impossible to tune away from a strong interfering station. One either waited or requested the interfering station stand by. In fairness to the Navy, it should be pointed out that not all amateurs were considerate enough to do so.

This led the Navy, in coalition with commercial interests, to flex its political muscles. Between 1902 and 1912, Congress introduced twenty-eight different bills attempting to eliminate amateurs from the airwaves.

The first in the U.S. Congress was the Roberts Bill of 1909, although U.S. negotiators tried to ban amateurs at the Berlin Convention of 1906. The Roberts Bill would have given control of the airwaves to the Navy, denying the very existence of amateurs.

But the Marconi Company, which built the best commercial wireless apparatus, saw an opportunity. By helping assure the defeat of the Roberts Bill, Marconi could equip the

Navy with the latest in transmitters and receivers.

Magazines joined the Navy and the commercial interests in amateur bashing. The January 5, 1910 *Outlook* devoted five pages to an anti-amateur tirade. Non-radio people tended to take the Navy's side, yet amateurs outnumbered all other wireless operators five to one. In 1915, just three magazines catered to the estimated 4,000 amateurs.

The defeat of the Roberts Bill opened the floodgates. The unsuccessful Burke Wireless Bill was followed by the Depew Wireless Bill, which declared it illegal to interfere with any commercial station. The bill would have required all stations to register in different classes, but it included no amateur class so, had the bill passed, amateurs would have become lawbreakers.

Modern Electrics, an amateur-oriented magazine, ran articles that helped defeat the Depew Wireless Bill. The Junior Wireless Club of America, an early amateur organization, also contributed to the defeat.

The Navy and companies including United Wireless continued anti-amateur lobbying. The Alexander Bill of December 1911 and the Smith Bill of March 1912, the first of thirteen anti-amateur bills in 1912, again would have put the U.S. government in charge of the airwaves, and it would have abolished amateur wireless.

But the efforts of the Radio Club of America (formerly, the Junior Wireless Club of America) and several regional clubs defeated all these bills.

Finally a legislator hatched a scheme to restrict amateurs to the "useless" shorter wavelengths, where they would languish to oblivion. It was a perfect plan. Although ships used 450–600 meters because of their limited antenna space, everyone knew that shorter wavelengths made the communications inefficient, and that the optimum wavelength was about 1,000 meters. Relegated to "200 meters and down," amateurs would "never bother anyone again."

The resurrected, revamped Alexander bill passed the Senate on May 1912. The wireless clubs fought hard when it went to the House, demanding better definitions for rule infractions and, to assure their continued existence, government licenses for amateurs.

These items having been amended, President Taft signed the bill into law on August 15, 1912. The commercial users celebrated their great victory, confident that amateurs would soon lose interest and become extinct.

But amateurs quickly discovered that "the vast wasteland below 200 meters" was far more useful than the longer wavelengths for working long distances. Soon amateurs were working DX on their "short waves" as never before and, rather than dwindling interest, their excitement attracted unprecedented numbers of new amateurs to the ranks. Their continued experimental efforts to improve equipment and antennas laid the groundwork for the hobby we enjoy today.


from the December '92 *Sierra Intermountain Emergency Radio Assn. 'SIERA'*—Dorothy Uebele, N7MXA Editor

Convention from page 7

known before only as fists or voices. It's a great mix of old hands and newcomers. If you are one of the former, be sure to extend a welcome to any "new recruits" you meet.

Sunday breakfast *isn't* at Tiffany's, but is likely to be more fun and more filling.

Do you dream of going on a DXpedition, but remain uncertain who to contact, where to go, what to take, how to get a license, etc.? Several DXpeditioners will be on hand to answer your questions. Are you planning a DXpedition and needing more operators? The International DX Convention is the place to find them.

Did you ever wonder why some of the other guys in the pileups are so rude and obnoxious? Well some DXers have studied the operating patterns and practices of lids. You'll learn their revelations at the convention. And don't forget the door prizes galore. Come early and join the fun. 

Memories of "Uncle Vern," W6ERS

by W.E. "Bip" Bachman, W6BIP,
and Elsie Bachman, WA6GQC

I first met Vernon Howard, W6ERS, at the San Francisco Radio Club in 1930 and we soon became fast friends.

Vern graduated from Mission High School and went to the University of California at Berkeley, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and earned a Master's Degree in Literature. One of his challenges was to take every civil service exam the city and county of San Francisco offered. At one time he was number 1 and 2 on the Policeman and Fireman's List, but then he decided he didn't want to be either.

He was an avid reader, reading a book a night. Vern had a photographic memory on book titles. Although interested in the book business, he still had to earn a living, so he became a bridge tender on San Francisco's Third Street Bridge.

When the bridge burned, he was put on leave and had to find another job. He became an English teacher at Continuation High School in San Francisco. But a year later, when the bridge was repaired, he went back to tending it.

Later, he became a trouble shooter for San Francisco Water Department customers in San Mateo County, where he finished his work in five hours each day, then spent the

next three hours reading his books. He collected books on mountains; his collection is considered the world's largest.

In the early Sixties, Vern acquired a 75-foot PG&E tower for his San Francisco station and, with the help of the late Hensley Morehan, WA6DJI, installed a yagi and became a powerful DXer.

W6ERS was one of the first NCDXC members on the club's 2-meter repeater. Many years later, being on the Honor Roll and having "worked the old bands dry," he began DXing on the WARC bands.

When Vern and his wife, Dorothea, moved to San Mateo five years ago, Vern

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Joe Horvath, W6GPB

from page 1

premiere DX award was Worked All Continents (WAC). In those days working all continents was difficult, if not impossible. With the growth of radio and the improvement in technology and equipment, WAC became easier.

The DXCC came into being around 1937. In these days of high pressure DXing, no one knows who was responsible for the idea. Even the ARRL cannot tell you. But it came, stayed, and became the most intensive amateur operating activity we know today. Joe was there at the beginning.

The initial DXCC certificate was awarded when one confirmed 75 countries. It was not easy and few calls made the initial monthly listings. But W6GPB was among them. And when the DXCC Honor Roll program began, Joe was there with QSLs in hand.

The Northern California DX Club was organized in 1946, and Joe appears on its membership roster dated June 1951. Until well into the Sixties, he was Marin County's only NCDXC member.

Joe served as an NCDXC officer and for some years as editor of the *DXer*. He continued to work most everything that came on the air, but lost some of this enthusiasm in the celebrated Don Miller affair of the mid-sixties. This, along with the ARRL's advocacy of incentive licensing at about the same time, lead him to withdraw

from active participation, though he kept his license and his fraternal contacts with other mature DX types.

During the fallow years, he took to scouting for antique radios, which he repaired and refurbished. His shack was in a small building at the rear of his home on Third Street across from the United Market. It had all Joe's Amateur gear plus shelves loaded with his antique radios.

Years earlier he had purchased property in the Black Point area, intending to build a new QTH there but, as many DXers with high towers learn, the decision to pull up roots, foundations, and the underground wiring is difficult.

Joe was a mechanic for Greyhound Lines. Greyhound provided both local and long haul passenger service then. He was a skilled mechanic as well as a qualified electrician. He was also on call to resuscitate stranded Greyhounds whenever and wherever (on North Bay highways) they happened to lose their incentive.

Recently Joe returned to amateur radio. He suspected his gear from the Sixties might not be compatible with today's DXing. He phoned to ask what was the top-rated gear, saying that he wanted "the top of the line." He was cautioned about taking such a firm stand until he reconnoitered local Amateur radio outlets.

Joe had been a contemporary in the DX club of Bob Ferrero, W6RJ (then K6AHV), owner of the Ham Radio Outlet chain. The advice given was that Joe might do well to renew old DX friendships before deciding what gear to buy.

DXers never forget another DXer. Joe did buy new gear and he soon was heard again on the DX bands. Joe never lost his natural sense of humor. Some years back he told me, "The biggest mistake I had ever made was turning 80."

He had medical problems, but the last time I saw him—about a month before his passing—he looked well, though not as vigorous as he once had been. He still talked DX and we reminisced on the good old days we both had known.

W6GPB was a power in DXing a few decades back. He gave me the Novice test some thirty five years ago and he took me to my first Northern California DX Club meeting. By joining, I increased the club's Marin County membership by one-hundred percent. In the years of the West Coast DX Bulletin I advised Joe by phone of any new ones showing or scheduled, so he could catch them with minimum effort. He did just that, to keep his DXCC standing current. W6GPB's passing makes me realize that older DXer's personal horizons are growing ever more bare; those who gave character to life when we were younger are passing from the scene.



Dit and Dah Talk Radios DSP: A Sound Improvement

by Tim and Al Megahertzzi

Dear Tim and Al:

I've heard talk of DSP. What is it?
Eddie-on-the-Hill
(Auburn, CA)

Tim: "Thanks for your inquiry, Eddie, but I think you've already got it. DSP is Deprived Sensory Perception. You know, the opposite of ESP. Hams over 40 who live above 100-foot altitude are susceptible."

Al: "Tim is partially correct. I know Eddie and he certainly is deprived ... or is it depraved? But I think he's asking about Digital Signal Processing, which is now finding its way into Amateur Radio."

"DSP uses digital methods to process signals, such as the audio signals in a receiver. The signals are converted to digital, processed, then converted back to audio and, if all goes as planned, the output will sound better than the input."

Tim: "That's the nicest thing you ever said to me, Al. Eddie, DSP is great for certain types of noise. Hams in less than desirable neighborhoods can use DSP to reduce the effects of low-rider sound systems, clashing motorcycle chains, and small arms fire."

"They can also be effective against the receiver hash generated by low-flying police helicopters. In your case, Eddie, don't stay in town without one."

Al: "Talk about oversell! Granted, DSP works wonders on noise, but an Uzi? DSP can reduce atmospheric noise, the kind your

receiver's noise blanker misses. But another nice thing is the automatic tracking and elimination of carriers—a feature that should warm the hearts of net operators and list workers.

"One West Coast Swapnet operator I know claims a DSP radically reduced his blood pressure.

"DSP's can also work as neat CW filters, reducing bandwidth to as little as 30 Hz. And a DSP in CW filter mode doesn't have the "ringing" common to other types."

Tim: "Right on, Al. During a recent CW contest, my DSP made the difference between easy copy and nearly impossible using just my 500-Hz filter.

"Also, every Sunday I work an old friend on 75 meters. The DSP not only cuts the heavy static, but allows us to have a longer QSO as the band deteriorates. So, Ed, I suggest you purchase a DSP unit. You'll be glad you did."

Al: "Ed, I think you'll be impressed with what your new DSP can do for you. I also think DSP units will become a standard part of future ham gear, because their performance is astounding. They are already available on some new rigs.

"If you want to learn more about DSP, read the article by Bruce Hale, KB1MW/7, in the July '91 *QST*. Bruce does a fine job of describing DSP functions.

"I hope Tim and I have answered your questions. Best of luck and 73!"

from the Dec. '92 *River City ARCS* (Sacramento, CA) 'Newsletter'—N6YQD Ed.

Sony Success Key

An article in the October 12, '92 *InfoWorld* calls Amateur Radio a key factor in getting ahead at Sony. According to Mickey Schulhof, who runs CBS Records and Columbia Pictures, both owned by Sony, "You just have to be a ham." It seems Sony executives sometimes plot world domination over a hot linear down in the basement, not on the golf course.

from the December '92 *Austin ARC 'AARC Over'*—Anne Click, KB5RHA Editor

Federal Rules Preempt Local Laws

An amateur in the Chicago area won a case against his county for the right to erect an antenna that exceeded the county's height limit. The case of *Evans vs. Board of County Commissioners*, 753 Fed. Supp. 973, came about after Evans' applications to erect a 125-foot ground-mounted antenna was rejected.

Even his application for variances and special use permits to put up an antenna between 60 and 100 feet were rejected because of the local 35-foot ordinance.

Evans' attorney encouraged him to sue the county on the basis that FCC rules allowing Amateur Radio antennas preempt local law. (The Constitution provides that federal laws prevail when they conflict with local laws.)

In his ruling in Evans' favor, the judge explained that Congress created the FCC in 1934 to regulate interstate and foreign communications.

Now, fifty years later, the FCC has ruled that federal laws allowing Amateur Radio antennas exceeding local height limits shall be permitted, since local height-limit laws cannot be allowed to interfere with the federal government's policy of promoting Amateur Radio communications.

information from the April 7, '92 *Chicago Tribune* via the November '92 *Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab ARC* (Laurel, Maryland) 'ARCNOTES'—KA3OUT Editor.

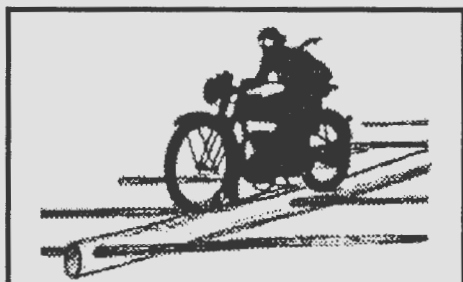
Uncle Vern, W6ERS

by Bip and Elsie Bachman

continued from page 9

decided to reduce his book collection and move what remained to his new home. The collection had filled his bookstore and overflowed into at least three rented garages.

Elsie and I remember Vern as our best man in 1943. Our children remember enjoying his wit. Elsie especially remembers the times she and Vern conversed in German. We both shall truly miss him.



Joe de Eckser says he always wears a leather jacket and gloves when he climbs his tower—protection from the elements.

—AF6S

A Signal Corps Secret



by M-Sgt "Huck" Huckabee, AA5BU

During training as mobile CW operators during WWII, four men were assigned to a radio vehicle with a 20-foot whip mounted forward and a tie-down rope for the whip.

The receiver bandpass was 20 KHz, to allow for drift and the transmitter's awful chirp. The whip swayed when the vehicle moved, causing frequency warbles.

The net control officer at the base station, required us to keep moving during exercises. The lack of warbles would give us away if we stopped.

One day we wanted to stop at a country store for a snack—which was strictly forbidden! We parked in the shade of a tree and took turns operating, being on "whip duty," or going into the store. What is whip duty? You pull the whip's tie-down rope to make the whip sway back and forth.

Our trick allowed stopping for a snack, and sending was far easier when the vehicle wasn't moving. We didn't reveal our secret until after the war, of course.

from the November '92 Austin ARC 'AARC Over'—Clovis Womack, WA5DKG Editor

Attorney Hunting, Texas Style

by Don, K17AE

Here are the key provisions of a proposed law to regulate the hunting and harvesting of attorneys in the state of Texas:

370.01: Any person with a Texas rodent hunting license may also hunt attorneys for sport (non-commercial) purposes.

370.02: Taking attorneys with traps and deadfalls is permitted, but the use of U.S. currency as bait is prohibited.

370.03: Willfully killing attorneys with automobiles is prohibited unless such vehicle is an ambulance being driven in reverse. An attorney accidentally killed by a motor vehicle should be removed to the roadside before the motor vehicle proceeds to a carwash.

370.04: It is unlawful to chase, herd, or harvest attorneys from a power boat, helicopter, or aircraft.

370.05: It is unlawful to shout "Free scotch," "Whiplash," or "Ambulance" for the purpose of trapping attorneys.

370.06: It is unlawful to hunt attorneys within 100 yards of a BMW, Mercedes, or Porche dealership.

370.07: It is unlawful to hunt attorneys within 200 yards of a courtroom, law library, health club, country club, hospital, or brothel.

370.08: It is not necessary to have a license to hunt, trap, or possess an attorney who gains elective office.

370.09: It is unlawful to be disguised as a reporter, accident victim, physician, chiropractor, or tax accountant while hunting attorneys.

- 370.10: Daily Bag Limits (per day)
- Yellow-bellied sidewinders 2
 - Two-faced tortfeasors 1
 - Back-stabbing divorce litigators ... 3
 - Horn-rimmed cut-throats 2
 - Minitiae-advocating chicken#!ts... 4
 - Honest Attorneys 0
- (endangered species, protected)

from the September '92 Garden City ARC 'Wireless'—WB8RQO, N8OEJ, KE8XY, and KE8MM co-editors.

Unlucky Seven

by David Dennis, WD8SCH

The following is from the November 7, '92 (Cleveland) Plain Dealer:

A Dearborn, Michigan police corporal was suspended and underwent psychiatric examination because he wrote the figure seven with a line across the down-stroke.

He tried to break the habit after being ordered to stop, but forgot on some reports and was subsequently brought before a disciplinary board. "The way he wrote sevens confused the typist," the police chief said, "and he defied my order to stop. He was told he would face disciplinary action if he didn't."

With 85 percent of the world's literate people putting a horizontal slash on the script seven, the ignorance of the chief is only too evident. One wonders what would happen to the corporal if he also slashed his zeros—beheading?

from the Indian Hills RC 'Smoke Signals' via the December '92 West Park Radiops 'W8VM Log.'—AF8C Editor

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