

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



The Editor's Keyboard

50th Anniversary Meeting!



graphic by
 Bill Fontes, W6TEX

The October meeting is a very special occasion — the fiftieth anniversary of the Northern California DX Club. The meeting kicks off a year of celebration and activities: if you missed it, see the extensive page-one coverage in the September issue of *The DXer*.

The centerpoint of the October meeting will be champagne, coffee and a big birthday cake. Bill Fontes, W6TEX and Chuck Vaughn, AA6G have invited all surviving Charter Members as Guests of Honor, and we are confident several will attend. Also planned is a short program, most likely a DXpedition video.

The October meeting will be held Friday, October 11, at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo. Socializing and/or dinner commences at 6:30. The meeting is at 8 PM.

The November meeting will be out of this world. In addition to DXing, our multitalented Chuck Vaughn, AA6G, is a first-rate photographer of deep-space objects, whose work has been published in *Sky and Telescope*. Chuck will treat us to views of DX most of us will never work.

Please note that the November meeting will be held on the 15th—the *third* Friday of the month. This break in tradition is necessitated by scheduling conflicts at the Dunfey, our meeting place for more than two years. Hey: life is full of surprises! Mark that one down now.

The Dunfey is located on the northwest side of the junction of Freeways 92 and 101 in San Mateo. Take the Delaware St. exit from 92. Monitor W6TI/R on 147.36 for routing assistance. Guests and interested parties are always welcome.

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50th Anniversary Update

October 10th is the beginning of the year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the NCDXC. We need your participation to make the anniversary a success!

Sign up to use W6TI from your QTH. Here is a unique opportunity to use the NCDXC club callsign from your station for a one-week period. DX stations will be looking to work W6TI to earn 10 QSO-points toward the 50 required for the 50th Anniversary Certificate. Contact Bill, W6TEX as soon as possible to get the week of your choice.

What's Happening this Month? October is the kick-off month. We'd like to see as many club members as possible on the air this month to get the anniversary off to a good start. The announcement appeared in "How's DX" in the October QST and has made its way around the world via the Since October is not a full month, the primary activities for members commence

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N O R T H E R N
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Club Officers:

President: Ted Algren, KA6W
 Vice President: Doug Westover, W6JD
 Secretary: Peter Gerba, KN6BI
 Treasurer: Gordon Girton, W6NLG
 Director: Eric Swarz, WA6HHQ
 Director: Lloyd Cabral, AA6T
 Director: Al Burnham, W4RIM

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DX Ladder: Dave Bernstein, AA6YQ
 Contest Manager: vacant
 9-Band Award: John Brand, K6WC
 California Award: Ruben Hughes, WA6AHF
 Historian/archivist: Ron Pantan, W6VG
 Records Manager: Ron Pantan, W6VG
 Publications Mgr: Ron Pantan, W6VG

Club Repeater, W6TI/R

Frequency/offset: 147.36 MHz, +
 Trustee: Bob Vallio, W6RGG
 Comm. Chairman: Eric Swarz, WA6HHQ
 Club simplex: 147.54 MHz (suggested)
 Thurs. Net QTR: 8 pm local time.
 Net Manager: Randy Wright, WB6CUA
 DX News: Dave Pugatch, KI6WF
 Propagation: Al Lotze, W6RQ
 Swap Shop: Ben Deovlet, W6FDU
 QSL Information: Mac McHenry, W6BSY

W6TI DX Bulletins:

W6TI Station Trustee Bob Vallio, W6RGG, transmits DX information at 0200 UT 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. Unless otherwise noted, NCDXC permits re-use of any article in this publica-

Whiskey Shots

We Are 50 Years Young!

It was a happy and dynamic period for our nation. DXers around the world were ready to QSO hams in any and every country they could hear. The time was October, 1946, following World War II. Many equipment advances made during the war had provided DXers with better receivers and transmitters for communicating with new “rare ones.” DXing had really come of age.

The past fifty years have gone by much too quickly for us all. Those of you who remember way back can reflect upon how ten very creative and forward-thinking gentlemen founded our NCDXC. Those men,

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Bud Walton, W6AED | Phil Caldera, W6IKQ | |
| Jack Holmes, W6BUY | Reg Tibbetts, W6ITH | |
| Elvin Feige, W6TT | | |
| Mario Chirone, W6DUB | Bud Downey, W6QLH | Ray Brennan, W6UPV |
| Charles Henry, W6EJA | Horace Greer, W6TI | |



created a club—the first incorporated DX Club in the world—committed to the pursuit of DX, while maintaining camaraderie and the highest ethical standards.

That was then, and this is now—October, 1996. Fifty years into the life of the World’s Greatest DX Club. Let us celebrate and enjoy this noteworthy achievement during the next twelve months. Join in the celebration by participating in the events planned by Chuck, AA6G and his able committee. Get that rig fired up and start talking—with your fellow DXers around the world. There are some very nice awards for members and DX stations alike.

Make it a point to attend the October meeting—the kickoff to our year-long celebration!

Board of Directors Meeting

A BoD meeting was held September 24 at the home of W6VG, and was convened at 7:15 PM by President Ted Algren, KA6W. Also present were: Doug Westover, W6JD, Vice President; Gordon Girton, W6NLG, Treasurer; Ron Pantan, W6VG, Acting Secretary; Garry Shapiro, NI6T, *DXer* editor and *ex officio*; members Chuck Vaughn, AA6G and Dan Curry, WB6STW.



- Minutes of the previous board meeting were discussed. Due to KN6BI’s business pressures, W6VG has been appointed Acting Secretary.
- Ted Algren brought up a letter from W7XA ré changing the meeting night. The board was not against such a move, but it would be subject to a vote of the general membership. Ted has met with the Tied House in Mountain View ré possible use of their facilities. The club would have to guarantee about 50 dinners at approximately \$15 each, for free use of their meeting room.
- Treasurers report was approved. Gordon is working on a budget for 1997. CD accounts will be changed for best financial advantage as they come due.
- The new Roster will be published at year-end to include the new vanity call signs

acquired by members. Changes in area codes by Pac Bell will also require a change in the Roster, but no definite date has been set. Board approved printing two Rosters per year.

- There was discussion of dues checks postmarked after the September 1st deadline. Board re-affirmed the Bylaws requirement for reinstatement for these members.
- The annual Christmas dinner party is being handled by Doug Westover, W6JD. Three possible sites are being considered: Martinelli's, Elks Club, and the American Legion Hall with a catered dinner. Date and details will be provided when arrangements are finalized.
- The NCDXC 50th anniversary meeting will be held October 11, and will be arranged by AA6G and W6TEX. The November meeting will feature deep space astronomical photos, presented by Chuck Vaughan, AA6G.
- The 1997 DX Convention in Fresno is moving ahead with chairpersons working on promotion, awards, and registration. There was discussion of possible MC's.
- The board authorized up to \$300 for transcription costs for interviews with DX club charter members.
- NI6T expressed his approval of the new scanner purchased by the club.
- Board approved a new club badge price of \$14 to cover actual costs.
- The NCDXC will be represented at Pacificon at a DX Forum by W6JZU, W6OAT, NI6T, and W6OTC.
- Marathon contest results have been meager, and are being handled by our president in lieu of a contest chairperson.

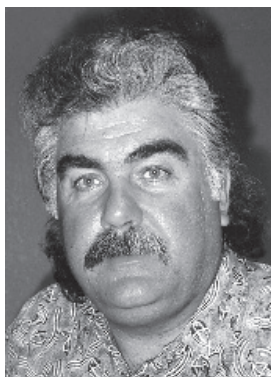
The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

—Ron Panton, W6VG, Acting Secretary

General Meeting

The September meeting was held on Friday the 13th, at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, and was called to order by President Ted Algren, KA6W, at 8:05pm. Guests included Chris, N6MAW and Johanna, XYL of Apollo, WA6HRX.

- The membership approved the Treasurer's Report as printed in *The DXer*.
- As Chuck, AA6G, 50th Anniversary Chairman, was unable to attend, Bill, W6TEX gave an overview of the Club's 50th Anniversary Celebration plans. Many of the details regarding the event are now available on Chuck's Web site. Bill is also the person to contact about using the W6TI callsign for a week during the Celebration year.
- Smitty, W6JZU, will head a DX Forum at the upcoming Pacificon '96 Convention, October 18-20 at the Concord Hilton.
- Ted, KA6W relayed a letter from Al, W7XA requesting that the Club hold monthly meetings on a weeknight other than Friday. Discussion followed. The matter will be forwarded to the BoD.
- Ted also commented that the Convention '97 plans are coming along nicely under the careful guidance of Co-Chairmen WB6UDS and AB6ZV.
- The evening's program was another fine presentation by Tom Schiller, N6BT, of Force 12 Antennas. Tom began with antenna system basics and a discussion of



Treasurer's Report

September, 1996

Income:

HRO (for roster)	\$600.00
Dues	350.00
Paid '97-'98 W6TC	<u>24.00</u>
Total	\$974.00

Expenses:

DXer	
Copy Cost	\$ 358.33
Postage	240.99
Meeting Room	50.00
CQ Award (Trophy)	50.00
By Laws Manual(s)	64.71
Roster	532.51
Deposit (Xmas Dinner)	<u>100.00</u>
Total	\$1,396.54

Income	\$ 974.00
Expenses	1,396.54

CD's

Great Western Bank @ 6%	\$20,000.00
1st Nationwide Bank @ 5%	9,970.53

Checking (B of A):

Club	\$ 7,944.26
DX Convention, Fresno	<u>3,361.42</u>
Total cash	\$41,276.21

Club Membership

September 1, 1996

Charter	4
Honorary	10
Life	32
Family X2	4
Associate	5
Absentee	24
Full	<u>223</u>
Total	306

—Gordon Girton, W6NLG, Treasurer



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A Season in (Computer) Hell

Garry Shapiro, NI6T

It seemed a good time to get that space, and to ensure maximum data transfer rate, while I was at it.

I knew that playing with hard disks—especially when one knows just enough to be dangerous—could be risky business. So I was careful to back up to tape before each re-format. The tape backups were boring, but without incident, and I got cocky. I tried various things over the next several days and nights, while downloading and using disk utilities. Finally, after failures and discussions, it was clear that I was climbing a rope, and I determined to restore the *status quo*.

Until then, my backups had required a single tape. Having two tapes, I had leapfrogged them, so I always had a recent good backup. Usually, after backing up, I would perform a “compare” to ensure the integrity of the backup. But this was time-consuming, and I was in a hurry.

Two things now combined to send me to Computer Hell. First, I had added just enough new material to the disk to require a second tape for the backup. This meant there was only one set, which had to be overwritten the next time. Second, it was very late, and I was very tired. A tech at the drive-maker had suggested a low-level format—a total erasure of the hard disk, compared to a normal format, which merely overwrites the disk contents. The difference is significant: a formatted hard disk can be unformatted, or recovered. With a low-level format, the disk contents are history.

The first tape proceeded normally. The second tape, said the software, was write-protected, and the backup stopped. I found that the write-protect tab had been jostled—no biggie. I moved it back, re-inserted the tape and continued. A little voice said “Idiot! Start over!” I ignored it. Men are not good about listening to their little voices. As Zorba said, “Am I not a man?”

The backup appeared to complete normally. It was 3:30 AM; I skipped the Compare, and low-level formatted the

For better or worse, most DXers now use computers for logging; many also depend on the little marvels for QSLing, packet, RTTY, Internet, contesting, antenna simulation—or editing newsletters. When they work, they are marvelous and indispensable. When they don’t...

One fateful day in August, I decided to try K6STI’s *RITTY* and *DSP Blaster* programs. Brian, K6STI has written these two packages utilizing the PC’s CPU as a

Digital Signal Processing (DSP) engine. *RITTY* provides the functionality of a RTTY modem, while *DSP Blaster* is an audio add-on providing an alternative to standalone DSP audio boxes. Their use requires a Sound Blaster™ audio card, which provides the A-to-D and D-to-A functions.

Accordingly, I purchased a Blaster card, and installed it. And there my troubles began.

Motherboards are supported in only a few places, and pushing a card into a slot flexes and stresses the multilayer board. Something deep in the bowels of my motherboard parted; the computer was dead.

Irritated, but undaunted, I purchased a new motherboard, faster than its predecessor, and installed it and the Blaster without incident. Now the Devil tugged at my elbow: “Your CPU is almost three times faster,” he crooned. “Isn’t it time to try to extract more performance from that hard disk?” It seemed reasonable to me: due to a peculiarity of DOS, well-known to the annointed but unworthy of space here, not all of my hard disk was accessible.

The screen repeatedly asked “Are you sure you want to do this?” Yes, I did. So it did it.

When I went to restore (i.e. spool the tapes back to the hard disk) the tapes howled and whined—and stopped. Tape 1 and Tape 2 could not recognize each other as parts of the same set. I tried again, with the same result. My blood ran cold. Most of what was on those tapes was replaceable—applications, DOS, Windows—or nonessential. But also on those tapes, irreplaceable and precious beyond value, was my log.

Some hams—even some DXers—don’t bother to keep a log. Most do. For those of us who chase not only DX but DX awards, the log is the living record of pileups broken, New Ones worked, friends contacted, victories, defeats. I felt like I had sent my child off on a journey that I knew, or should have known, was perilous. I felt sick. I turned off the computer and stared out the window at the darkness. “OK, now what?” I thought.

Morning brought hope, as mornings do. I called Symantec, who made the backup software, part of *PC Tools*. The technician had no magic solution: only a few data recovery companies do tapes; he recommended *Ontrack* in Minneapolis. He warned that data recovery is pricey. Indeed, *Ontrack* wanted \$200 just to look at the tapes, and another \$400 to \$1000 to recover them, if possible. I forgot to breathe for a while.

I called Colorado Systems, who made the tape drive. They suggested an outfit in San Diego. That outfit would look at the tapes for free, but cautioned that if the tapes were in the *PC Tools* proprietary format, they could do nothing.

I called the local Computerland, talked to a service tech, and was referred to an outfit in Santa Clara, to whom I brought the tapes. This was a one-horse sweatshop operation. I called back the next day and was told there was no progress. “What tools are you using for recovery?” I asked. I might have asked that question

unemployed status; they agreed. I also reiterated that the log files were the only files that mattered: were they there?

I received a FAX with a list of the files in the crucial directory—they *were* there! I felt a surge of relief, quickly dampened by the realization that the listing of the files did not of itself guarantee their recovery. That turned out to be all too true.

Now there were more days of waiting, until there arrived a compact disk with all the recovered files. But the download to the hard disk stopped after only 500 files; what was this? The *Ontrack* engineer said that such compact disks sometimes had problems with some CD ROM drives. It sounded far-fetched to me, but I replaced the CD ROM drive—and the CD downloaded without incident. But one crucial file was missing.

Of the three essential files, one was the database, another the index. The third turned out to be just a database for award tracking. But the database file—containing all the QSO information—was not there! More frantic calls to Minneapolis: it was on the original listing; where had it gone?

The response came the next day, just as I was leaving for a job interview. The file was on their server with all the other recovered files, they said, but they could not recover it from the server. They were sorry, they added, and they were returning my money.

It was hard to concentrate on the job interview. My mind was whirling and I felt like a caged rat. So close and yet so far! That night, I sent a FAX to *Ontrack*. I thanked them for their efforts and for the consideration of returning the money. But I reiterated my determination not to give up, and observed that it was un-believable that *Ontrack*, conceded by many to be the best data recovery house, could not retrieve a file from its own server. I implored them to try once more, to dare to be heroes. And then I went to bed.

The next morning, *Ontrack's* Service

earlier, but now I was listening to my inner voices. Wonder of wonders: he had no special tools! In fact, he was just trying whatever anyone else could have tried. I drove down and got the tapes and sent them to San Diego.

After several days of agonized waiting, the word came from San Diego: sorry, the tapes *were* in that proprietary format. So

they were shipped to *Ontrack*, in Eden Prairie, MN. After several more days, *Ontrack* provided the first glimmer of hope: the tapes appeared to be recoverable, but each tape appeared to have the same files. This meant that each was the first of a two-tape set—and there was no second tape. So there were lost files.

Were the three log files there and salvageable, or were they lost or damaged? With \$200 already spent, *Ontrack* wanted \$600 to recover the files. I asked for a reduction, citing my non-corporate,

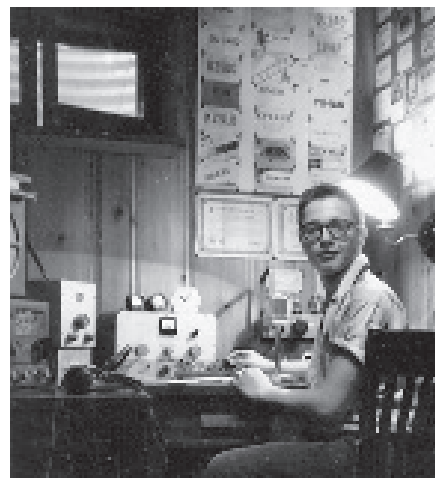
Manager called. They had tried again to recover that file, he said—and had succeeded. It “looked good,” and was on its way to me, FedEx. The CD arrived the next day, Friday the 13th, exactly one month after the blown backup. With trembling hands, I downloaded it to the disk, and looked at its contents. It looked promising. I opened the logger. “Check Data Base Integrity?” it asked. I pushed “Y” and it flitted through the short test—a good sign. I went to “Search,” and asked for all 1996 QSO’s. In a blink, there was January! For a moment, I stared incredulously at the screen, then leapt from my chair, yelling! “Yes!” I shouted, “yes, yes, YES!” I felt like I had been rescued at sea—or had just made a clean QSO with Heard Island on 160 meters.

Life is full of bullets dodged and bullets not dodged. Much of what we suffer is self-inflicted, as was this. That I could have done this to myself after ten years of active computer useage is a testimony to the power of exhaustion and distraction to sabotage clear thinking and self-discipline. I hope I have learned something from this experience. I hope you have, too.

Mystery Photo

This obscure NCDXC member—only two other members have ever seen his face—is shown at his basement station in 1957, when he was 15 years old. Note the Heathkit AT-1 (standard issue for most newcomers of that era) and companion VF-1 VFO, and the compact homebrew 807’s from the *Handbook* under the surplus PA amp, converted to an AM modulator. The wallpaper is the fruit of his first year as a DXer, which began when he worked HP1EH—and ran from the shack, screaming with excitement. Who is he?

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The Stone That Knows DX

Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD

It is evident now that we are getting onto the back side of the summer curve and that the sun, the sunspots and the A and K-indexes and all that, are moving south towards the equator. This also brings some early signs of the coming winter season. A cord of firewood for the winter's fireplace was delivered last week and needed moving up the hillside, to the back of the QTH. One always needs a tale of woe to merit sympathetic listening and that is ours for this month—enough woe to make even a Spartan sob.

After a few trips up the brick walk, we got the idea that we had not talked with the Old Timer for a couple of days and up the hill we went, our keen sense of priorities prevailing. The Old Timer had had a visitor who was just leaving. He did look familiar—we had seen him in other places at other times but we could not really nail this one down.

The Old Timer, in introducing this one, cleared the mystery. “This is a QRPer from up in the next county who recently worked his next-to-last needed DX Country on the current list. He says that the last one will show in about nine months, more or less.” A DXer! DXers never meet as strangers and this was one of the annointed, but he was leaving and we were arriving and soon he was gone.

I later would recall that I might have asked him some important questions, such as how did he find that next-to-last needed one and which was the last one that he needed? Anyone who has worked 300 or more DXCC countries knows the anxiety and long wait that must be endured for the last handful needed. Some really deserving DXers never do get all the current countries that they need, or a second chance at ones they missed, though they may spend a lifetime in the search.

The late Don Wallace, W6AM and his long need for CR8/Damao, often comes to mind. Don would always be ready to talk DXing, but if you asked him which ones he missed, you would get a small sigh, a shake of that gaunt frame and a too-obvious regret for not catching that single one, CR8/Damao, during the short time it was on. A DXer will remember such things.

A DXer will also appreciate the enduring regret that lingers for having missed a needed one when it was on. So we asked the Old Timer which one this up-country

QRPer still needed. Secretly a DXer will always feel an internal smugness when he hears of someone needing a country that he already has. That feeling must be embedded when one rubs the printing on a newly issued DXCC certificate. “I really don’t know,” the Old Timer said. “He never tells what he needs, only mentions it when he has worked it. A number of times I have wondered how he does it. I can remember times when he worked a rare or new one and when few if any other DXers, even knew it was on. At first I was suspicious Then one day he let something slip. I don’t know if I should even mention it. I really don’t.”

The tips of our ears were quivering. We did not want just a hint without the facts. As a certified DXer, we demanded our due! “Tell us!” we demanded. Later, I was certain that the Old Timer was but posing with that reluctance—he had to tell someone the story and, naturally, we were the most Deserving One around. On the Hill or elsewhere. Believe that! “You would never believe the story,” the Old Timer said and we were quick to voice belief in anything that he said or believed. We got our way.

“What do you know about jasper?” the Old Timer asked and we had to acknowledge that we knew it was found on the hill here, that it often was used for jewelry but little else. I soon learned that the Old Timer might really believe, in this instance, in the merchandise that he was selling. “Jasper,” the Old Timer intoned,

“is a variety of chalcedonic to cryptocrystalline quartz composed essentially of SiO₂, meaning silica, and has the hardness of quartz. Ancient wisdom held that jasper has medicinal values, this including the belief that wearing jasper strengthens the stomach. It does take a polish and, when polished, is an attractive stone and used in making jewelry. Did you know that?” Of course, we did not.

But we also would not argue the point. We wanted to know what all this was leading up to. We did find out. We are still wondering how we can exploit this knowledge before any of the other less-Deserving DXers learn of it. We leaned forward, nodded our head firmly and told the Old Timer to continue. We had to know.

“My friend from up-country,” the Old Timer continued, “let it slip one time that he has a DX Stone in the rear of his property, up a hillside like around here. He said he can get DX messages from the stone—though he does admit that it took him some time to learn the technique. But he swears by it, and the way he finds needed countries makes me wonder. What do you think?”

What were we supposed to think? We have long known that a few DXers with poor antenna locations and low power have worked countries that many DXers long for endlessly. And these are solid, true blue, ARRL-certified, QSL-verified contacts. They do it, say nothing and many wonder. Who would not? “This QRPer,” the Old Timer continued, “says that when he is looking for a needed one, he will go to his back yard jasper outcrop, place the palms of his hands there on a flat area and think of the country he needs. Now that he is down to one current DX country, he may not get many messages but he is certain he will, one of these days. And he is absolutely certain, not just hopeful. He

is certain that he will get the message when one is due and available. I may be skeptical of his claim, but I cannot dispute his success. I just cannot.”

We realized that we had been listening with our mouth open. We shut it. Then we got to thinking—thinking of jasper and the hidden powers often attributed to stones. Diamond, rubies, garnet, amethyst, jade and the like. And we still had some of the words of the Old Timer still fresh in our memory but yet with some questions unanswered. He had said that jasper is a variety of quartz. What has long been the method of establishing a radio frequency? Quartz! Quartz crystals. And what was the main element in the composition of jasper? Essentially silica, SiO₂. And in what gear in a DXer’s shack will you find silicon?. Transmitter, receiver and most peripheral devices. You might even say that DX is dead without silica. Some tend to think so. And where in the Western Reaches does one find the greatest collection of big gun, high country-total DXers? Silicon Valley! Where are the ARRL’s Pacific Division reps located, the ARRL Director, Vice-Director and the member of the DX Advisory Committee? Who elects the officers of the Northern California DX Club? Silicon Valley or its suburbs.

And then the light came on in the back of our mind and really took over. Years back, we had picked up a nice square block of jasper on an outcrop up the hill here. We had an idea that it would make a nice bookend if polished. We never did polish it, and a visiting DXer from Silicon Valley had asked for it. We gave it to him, foolish as we could be in our younger days. The realization was now coming that this one had prospered, DX-wise, in recent years, and we were now starting to wonder if his good fortune was due to our stone? Our stone! We could not shake the thought. Finally, we thought of the British Empire and how the coronation of a new ruler is made while the one to be crowned is seated in a chair, underneath which is a large stone. The Stone of Scone. And that is a fact. Absolutely.

We finally asked the Old Timer: “how did this friend of yours get wise to this power of the jasper, and how did he learn to read the messages?” We asked the question, but the answer brought more confusion to our thinking. “I asked him the same question,” the Old Timer said. “All he would say was that he learned the same way he learned code. Long and unceasing persistence. He would say nothing further. He did claim that most of his knowledge came one afternoon when he found a little old man with a green hat sleeping in the shrubbery in the back of his lot. When questioned, the little man would say nothing but that he had come to visit ‘...the ancestral family stone,’ this being a large block of jasper in a nearby outcropping. But the QRPer would not let the Little Man go and finally the QRPer was told that the stone gave off message vibrations when properly approached and he was shown how to hear them. And that is exactly what that QRPer says happened.”

We had to think this over. That visitor

from Silicon Valley had built himself a footrest for his operating position, and I am sure that he had put that large chunk of jasper into the footrest, the jasper that we had given him in a weak and ignorant moment. But that jasper outcrop up at the turn of the fireroad was still there. If we did not say anything about it, a lot of it could be acquired with little effort. We were already thinking of getting a diamond saw and cutting slabs of jasper with which we would pave the floor of the shack, that to ensure that we would never miss any DX emanations and especially any with vibrations about countries we needed. Maybe even some would go on the walls

around the operating position.

We had to stand up and walk around the Old Timer’s shack. The thought of the potential of the unleashed DX powers we now knew about and shortly would capture was causing our breath to quicken until it was coming in short gasps. Come to think of it, we had several times voiced passing greetings to a very small man we met while walking the fire road up the hill here. A little man wearing a green hat. He had once mentioned that he came from Nebraska; I was certain now that he had come from the McGillicuddy Reeks in County Kerry. Had we, again, missed a golden DX opportunity? Kerry was one of the places where Maud Gonne and William Butler Yeats would go and put their ears to the ground listening for the little people they were sure were there, living underground.

We knew that we had to keep this quiet, that a lot of the less successful DXers would scoff at the story of the Little Man and the magical powers of jasper. Thus, should the word be passed onto some members of the NCDXC, thought must be given not to release any of this information to the undeserving. Besides, the Old Timer had mentioned the ancient knowledge that those who wore jasper would gain protection against stomach problems. And what true blue DXer has not had an upset stomach from the fierce stress of trying to break through a pile-up to work a rare or needed country? What one indeed? And the bile that flows when one misses out! Every true-blue DXer knows that feeling. Aaaargh!

Later, thinking about the DX properties implied in jasper, we realized that possibly we had stumbled onto the reason that there are more HMO’s on the west coast than any place else in the country. Jasper is relatively common in the west. And also, possibly, there are more Little People sighted in the woods here than in any place else outside of Ireland.

This has to be cut short. I need to get up the hill to check my jasper claim.

It's 9-Band DXCC Submission Time Again!

The 9-Band DXCC is an ongoing personal achievement award program for NCDXC members—you must be a member to play!

Have you worked 100 countries on *any* or all of the eight HF bands or 160 meters? Would you like a *super* plaque and endorsements for your wall, proudly displaying your DX achievements? Many of your fellow members are already participants in this interesting—and no-hassle—program.

The eighth year of the program is almost complete; we hope you have been crossing off countries on your list.

Here is a brief review of the program.

- *Purpose*: to promote continued interest in DXing by all club members on all HF bands and 160 meters and to recognize DXing achievements by individual club members.
- *Eligibility*: you must have worked at least 100 countries on *one* band since October 10, 1987 or since you joined NCDXC, if after October 10, 1987.
- *Bands and modes*: 160 through 10 meters, including the WARC bands; any combination of modes.
- *Countries*: use the *current* ARRL Countries List (subtract your deleted countries) to track countries worked.
- *Endorsements*: numbered tags for the plaque are issued in the following increments: 100, 150, 200, 250, 260, 270, 280, 290 and 300.
- *Confirmation*: this award employs the honor system; no QSLs are required!

This is an ongoing, *personal* award—you are not competing against anyone! It was envisioned as a long-term effort.

The Club anniversary, October 10, is the cutoff date for counting countries each year, and the deadline for submission to me, K6WC, is December 1. To submit, merely state how many countries you have worked on each band where you are over 100 (*don't* send a list of countries worked—we believe you!). Include a check to cover the one-time cost of the plaque (includes one tag), and the cost of additional engraved country tag. Include the cost of mailing if you don't intend to come to the January, 1997 meeting, where the 9BDXCC awards will be presented.

If you already have the plaque, just apply for any additional tags you have earned. Here is a summary of costs:

9BDXCC Plaque (one time)	\$35.00
Band-Country-Total Tag, each	.75
Surface Mail-U.S.	5.00
Surface Mail-Foreign	7.00
Airmail-Foreign	20.00

To determine the number of tags, first see *Endorsements* above for the increments in which they are issued. For example, if you worked 110 countries on 40m, 190 on 20m and 125 on 15m, you would need to include \$3.00 for tags. That covers a 100-tag for 40m, 100- and 150-tags for 20m and a 100-tag for 15m.

Need a tally sheet? The ARRL Countries List provides an ideal record.

Send your band-country totals and your check—payable to the NCDXC (in U.S. Funds)—to: John Brand, K6WC, 9655 Tanglewood Circle, Orangevale, CA 95662.

—John Brand, K6WC

The Transformer

An Internet discussion about the frustrations of dealing with noisy power company hardware garnered many suggestions—including one to purchase a rifle. That brought this private response.

I was plagued by a noisy transformer about a mile from my house. It was clearly an internal fault in the transformer, because the noise was intermittent and variable. I fought with the power company for about a year—but to no avail.

Finally, one beautiful October evening, I had my chance. Being a volunteer Fire Service Officer, I had drill duty that month and—as it just happened—we had not had a water drafting drill on our new 3500-gallon tanker. And, as chance would have it, we also needed to work with our brand-new 1750 GPM (gallons/minute) water cannon. Coincidentally, the offending transformer was in the immediate vicinity of a great place to draft water.

I had my crew set up a drafting scenario and we started to pump water, using our water cannon as an outlet. I had the crew move the water cannon around a little just to get used to aiming the beast while pumping. Amazingly enough, the offending transformer was accidentally doused with 1750 GPM for about 20 seconds. Oops: the transformer blew itself to pieces!

Two hours later, a new transformer was in place and it has been as quiet as a mouse ever since.

Not a rifle, but a cannon—sort of...

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Mystery Photo

The smooth-cheeked young DXer was K2RQC, and is now Garry, NI6T, your Editor, bearded for 30 years. The two members who knew him when hairless were K6TZX (now W6JD)

The Sea Cucumbers of Conway Reef

Garry Shapiro, NI6T

The Macneil/Lehrer News Hour on PBS has a feature about “work on the margins”—unusual occupations. Cruising in my car, I chanced to hear a piece about sea cucumber fishermen in Puget Sound, which reminded me of my own experience with sea cucumbers—on Conway Reef.

Sea cucumber—a type of sea slug—is a tubular, soft-bodied invertebrate, much-prized as a delicacy in East and Southeast Asia. Virtually flavorless by itself, it is not so much cooked as marinated and sauced. Outside Asia, few eat them, and most Westerners consider their appearance and texture repulsive. I have tried it in Chinese restaurants—and frankly it is hard to see what the fuss is about.

Hundreds of years ago, long before the arrival of Europeans, there was a thriving trade in sea cucumbers between Australia/Indonesia and China. Today, Puget Sound fishermen dive for the creatures in 60 to 80 feet of cold water and sell them for export to Asia. I am sure that other divers in other waterways do the same.

One day, during our DXpedition to Conway Reef in March, 1995, I decided to do some snorkeling, hoping to find the spiny lobsters said to be there. The rest of our group was either operating or not interested, so I set off alone with flippers and mask to the southwest side of the

small cay. The “island” is little more than broken coral and shells piled up on the shallow center of the fringing reef. There are channels and pools in the coral, and a substantial current from the southeast, which accelerates as it encounters the shallows. The current makes solo snorkeling a bit dicey, and I took care to stay close to shore and to be aware of my position.

I had expected to see a great number and variety of fish, but, other than parrotfish and a few other brightly-colored reef fish, fish were relatively scarce. To my amazement, sea cucumbers were present in large numbers in shallow pools shaded from the current by coral walls. It was clear that not much predated upon sea cucumbers! Even the Fijian Navy contingent that visited the island during our stay ignored them, preferring to plunder the reef for giant clam and conch-like animals with almost perfectly conical, thick shells, whose name I never ascertained, but which I consumed in large quantities, raw.

Our diet during our stay had largely consisted of instant noodles, augmented with pumpkin, onions, and dried mushrooms we had brought. While we had caught and eaten a few reef fish, we had found these not to be very toothsome, and so were generally missing animal protein. The sea cucumber therefore piqued my interest. I

easily captured one—they are virtually inert—and brought it to our encampment.

I presented my brown, limp, almost-amorphous prize as a candidate for dinner. The reaction from the four Europeans was predictable—they were revolted! This was no surprise, as they had shown little interest in any of the local invertebrates. But the Japanese member surprised me by also showing no enthusiasm whatsoever. Then, as I stood with the animal in hand, the sea cucumber demonstrated a most peculiar and disgusting behavior—it expelled its guts.

The Macneil/Lehrer dissertation confirmed this as typical of sea cucumbers, which apparently perform this act as a deterrent to predators. Amazingly, the animal is able to regenerate its interior parts, and continue on. But the effect on my expedition companions was immediate, and best left to the imagination of the reader. Suffice to say that my initiative was unappreciated: I and my marine slug were summarily banished from the operating site. I returned it to the sea and thereafter devoted my off-time efforts to catching conventional fish.



Fres- no...1951

Once upon a time—about 45 years ago—the Northern California and Southern California DX clubs decided to hold an annual meeting in Fresno. The NCDXC was host for the second meeting and here are some excerpts from Chairman Bud Bane’s pre-convention publicity:

“Remember, we’re not at all interested in bringing in a howling mob. The meeting is essentially for members of both clubs. The committee is doing its best to put on a good program for *you*. It won’t

do *you* any good unless *you* attend.

“The open-house feature introduced at last year’s meeting by W6TT and W6DUB of Electric Supply Co. was so successful that Elvin and Mario have agreed to do it once again. Count on it as one of the off-the-program highlights. Bring your siphon!”

“Eimac has agreed to sponsor the speaker for the meeting. It will be Leigh Norton, W6CEM. He will give us the scoop on that excellent final amplifier built for W1FH with all the latest anti-TV treatments.

“Rooms will be available in four cat-

egories: *single* at \$4.00 to \$7.00, *double* at \$6.00 to \$8.00, *twin beds* at \$7.50 to \$8.50, *suites* at \$23.00 and up. All rooms have baths. Dinner on Saturday night will be \$3.25, breakfast on Sunday morning will be \$1.50, including tax/gratuities.”

—C .F. “Bud” Bane, W6WB



Pacificon '96

Don't forget: Pacificon '96 will be held at the Concord Hilton, October 18-20. The annual ARRL Pacific Division Convention is three days of Big Fun.

The bash starts Friday, October 18 with the all-day Antenna Seminar. Speakers include Doc Gmelin, W6ZRJ and Al Gaetano, W6VZT on antenna basics; Tom Schiller, N6BT on antennas and feedlines; Ed Farmer, AA6ZM on ladder line; Don Johnson, W6AAQ on the Screwdriver mobile antenna; Rob Hill on Patch antennas; Roy Lewallen, W7EL on how antennas work.

However, do tear yourself away from that one for the NCDXC DX Forum. Smitty, W6JZU chairs a panel that includes: Rusty, W6OAT; Glenn, W6OTC; and Garry, NI6T. Smitty's panel will emphasize the unique aspects of *being* DX.

Other forums of interest to our members include: a QRP and kit-building session by Doug Hendricks, KI6DS; Working the OSCARS with our own Omri Serlin, AA6TA; and a Morse session with our own, indefatigable Jim Maxwell, W6CF.

Pacificon features still more forums on the hour, vendor displays, VE examinations and a two-day swap meet. The Banquet is on Saturday night.

Pacificon has many events—too many for this space. Advance general admission is \$3. The Antenna Seminar is \$7 and the banquet is \$32. Send your check and an SASE to: Pacificon '96, PO Box 272613, Concord, CA 94527-2613

For further info, the Pacificon hotline is (510) 932-6125 and you can send e-mail to pacificon@designlink.com

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September Meeting

feedline losses. He then presented two of his recent designs—the “ZAGI” and the “ZR” or Z-Axis Radiator. Both had more than a few members scratching their heads and mumbling to themselves. Tom displayed photos of both designs in the field and working at a local commercial installation—which led to even *more* head-scratching and mumbling! Both designs are thoroughly tested and currently available, he said.

The meeting adjourned at 10:06pm.

—Lloyd Cabral, AA6T
for Peter Gerba, KN6BI, Secretary

—NI6T

NCDXC LADDER LEADERS

Mixed	Phone	CW	RTTY			
W6BSY 375	W6BSY 369	W6OAT 346	WA6AHF 272			
K6DC 375	W6ZM 361	K6DT 335	KN6J 245			
W6KH 370	W6ISQ 360	W6GO 335	W6GP 206			
W6ISQ 367	K5YY 356	W6ISQ 335	W6TEX 155			
W6ZM 366	K6WR 354	N6JV 335	K6GI 103			
W6RJ 364	K6PU 352	K6MA 335	NI6T 100			
K6MA 363	W6ZKM 352	K5YY 335	AB6ZV 48			
W6TSQ 363	K6MA 351	W6CUA 334	AA6TA 45			
K6PU 361	W6XP 350	W6DU 334	AA6YQ 16			
K6DT 359	W6LQC 348	W6TC 334	K6ANP 5			
80m	40m	20m	15m	10m		
W6RJ 300	W6TSQ 330	K6DT 349	WA6SLO 318	WA6SLO 304		
K5YY 276	W6GO 292	K5YY 348	W6OAT 317	K6DT 301		
W6TSQ 258	W6OAT 289	W6OAT 343	K6DT 315	K6XN 300		
WA6SLO 241	W6TC 278	K1ER 340	K1WVF 307	W6GO 290		
W6OAT 226	K6XN 275	K6OZL 340	K6MA 305	W6TSQ 290		
W6GO 222	K6DT 272	W6JD 335	W6GO 303	N6AN 281		
NI6T 211	W6ISQ 262	W6GP 333	W6NR 300	W6OAT 278		
N6JV 210	K6MA 260	WA6SLO 333	W6TSQ 300	W7XA 277		
W6TC 189	N6JV 259	W6GO 331	W7XA 298	K6BING 276		
K6XN 182	NI6T 256	K6MA 330	K6XN 298	N6JV 270		
160m	30m	17m	12m	6m		
K5YY 171	N6JV 185	K6MA 255	K6MA 205	WA6LLY 57		
K6RK 123	NI6T 181	AF6S 205	WA6SLO 175	K6BING 52		
N6JV 114	K6GI 162	N6JV 204	W6TC 172	K5YY 42		
KN6J 108	K6MA 160	NI6T 204	N6JV 170	W6KH 35		
K6GI 93	W6TC 160	W6TC 176	NI6T 167	WA6SLO 18		
K6ANP 75	K1ER 133	K6GI 174	WA6LLY 147	K6GI 13		
NI6T 63	AF6S 120	K1ER 146	AF6S 145	WA6BXH 1		
W6GO 60	N6HR 96	WA6SLO 143	K1ER 110			
AJ6T 56	W6JD 90	WA6LLY 142	K6GI 107			
W6RJ 54	W6GP 87	W6GP 107	N6AN 68			

—AA6YQ

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50th Anniversary Update

in November. Don't forget to make 50 contacts with other club members on the W6TI repeater. You can begin to accumulate those contacts at 0000Z on October 10th.

Next Month.. Starting November, the first weekend of each month will be the time to make 50 QSO's with 50 different DXCC countries in 50 hours. The first period starts at 0000Z on November 2nd and ends at 0200Z November 4th. November is also the month to work 50 DXCC countries on 15, 12 and 10 meters—these three bands have been combined due to the low solar flux. November has the highest MUF's of the year, so it should be possible to achieve this goal.

The 50th Anniversary Mug. Don't forget that to qualify for a mug you must work 50 club members on the repeater, 50 countries in one of the twelve 50-hour periods and 50 countries on one of the announced bands during the anniversary year. See the September *DXer* for details.

—Chuck Vaughn, AA6G
Anniversary Chairman

Happy Birthday, Sam!

According to the grapevine, our



favorite curmudgeon turns 85 this month.

Mr. Samuel D. Canter, W6TSQ of Mill Valley has reached yet another milestone in his long radio career. The Scourge of 40 Meters will most likely damn the Editor for even mentioning it, and damn him again for publishing the photo. Hey, Sam, we love you, so get over it!

Your friends around the world wish you "nachas" (they *do!*) and the best of many more solar cycles.

—N16T, WA6AUD, et al

K6MD in DL

I just received a note from Jerry Griffin. He's in Germany, and apparently won't be sent to Bosnia after all. He hopes to get on as DL/K6MD in a few weeks. His mailing address is:

Col. Jerry Griffin
CMR 431 Box 646
APO AE 09175

For those who might be traveling to Germany, his phone numbers are:

Flea Market Truths Revealed

Joe Mack, NA3T

What he says

This rig puts out a big signal
This is a fine CW rig
It's transmitter is outstanding
This rig is hot.
A vintage regenerative type.
I just retubed it
I aligned it myself.
I don't know whether it works.
It doesn't chirp.
It has lots of audio.
I just serviced it.
That's its original box.
Better buy it now.
It works at full power.
It has wide frequency coverage.
It has great frequency stability
It was a popular rig in its day.
QST called it unique.
tives
It needs a bit of tweaking.
It was in government service.
The dial needs lubrication.
I plugged it in. It lights up.
You won't find a better price
It's a collector's item.
It's from an estate sale.
It worked the last time I tried it.
A fuse was the only lightning damage
I have its [manual, etc.] somewhere.

I'll send it to you.
I'll carry it to your car.
It transmits on 80 meters.
Its tubes are worth the whole price.
It was the rig of my dreams
Many recognize its signal.
...vintage shack ambiance.
Another guy is interested.
Buy now, I'm leaving soon.

Flea-speak translation

It's 50 kHz wide.
It doesn't work on SSB
Its receiver is dead.
It's stolen.
It oscillates.
...with used tubes.
I jammed the slugs on the little transformers.
It doesn't.
...because there's no output.
...mostly a strong 120 Hz buzz.
I sprayed its innards with WD-40.
Just dump out the kitty litter.
It won't last much longer.
It sucks up lots of power
It drifts up and down, and outside the band.
...under crystal control; its VFO is kaput.
HF nets were devoted to its maintenance problems.
...and a few other things: the only time exple-
tives
have ever graced its pages.
Maybe Marconi could align it; no one else can.
...stored outdoors on a pallet for ten years.
The gears are stripped.
A two-foot flame came out of the top.
...from my point of view.
Its maker went belly-up.
Take up any problems with its last owner.
...in 1972.
...that I found with the cover on.
Don't hold your breath.
Anything to unload it.
Nothing but parasitics.
Good luck getting another 7360 for under \$80.
...when I was a kid.
They always recognize its unique distortion.
The smoke it emits will have you wheezing.
He sat on it while tying his shoelace.
The sumo wrestler who bought the last one is
coming this way. He isn't smiling.

—from the March '96 Amateur Radio Horizons, Jim Woods, KC7FG, Editor. Reprinted in the ARNS Newsletter, Dave Barton, AF6S, Editor.

011-49-6151-69-6263 (office)
011-49-6151-66-5154 (home)

He ends the note with "See you in January," so it appears that this activation won't last too long.

—Jim Maxwell, W6CF

Roster Changes

Change of address

Dick Wilson, K6LRN
PO Box 454
Cotati, CA 94931-0454

F I R S T
C L A S S

P. O. B O X 6 0 8
M E N L O P A R K, C A
9 4 0 2 6 - 0 6 0 8 U S A
