

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

Gate 2 Opens!

As we go to press, Gate 2 in the Vanity Callsign program has opened, and about forty NCDXC members are among some 4600 stateside hams—and some DX operators holding US callsigns—who have traded in their current calls for snazzy (or not-so-snazzy) new/old ones. *The DXer* will publish a complete list of our roster changes next month.

The explosion of callsign changes—the first in over two decades—climaxes months of feverish activity, as applicants pondered and anguished over their selection criteria, worried about getting their applications filed correctly, and anxiously awaited the results of this grand lottery. Many happy campers received one of their highest preferences.

So far, there seems to have been only one gross error—the issuance of an AT prefix (allocated to India) to a misfortunate ham north of San Francisco.

It will take a while for all this to settle out. Call recognition in pileups, contests, on the PacketCluster and even on W6TI is temporarily out-to-lunch. Thousands of e-mail addresses and callsign license plates will be changed over the next few weeks and months. There will be a major upward spike in the QSL printing business!

Gate 2 was only for Extra class amateurs—but this subset of US hams includes the majority of serious DXers and contesters. Many had missed or passed up the last opportunity for a 1x2 or 2x1 in the seventies and eighties and had waited impatiently for this opportunity.

Some who changed are relative newbies who have had their surrendered callsigns for only a short time; others gave up calls held for upwards of fifty years. This itself makes the program a great leveler—essentially, one's callsign is no longer an indication of one's seniority.

The change criteria seem incredibly varied. Many were happy to jettison cumbersome 2x3 calls for a 1x2 or to rid themselves of callsigns deemed unsuitable for unfortunate letter combinations. Some wanted to reconcile their calls to their current area of residence. Others I cannot figure out for the life of me! For many, dropping a letter in the prefix or suffix sufficed, but for others the exact combination was crucial. Contesters were particularly consumed with the esoterica of "effective" letter and number combinations, arguing and pontificating *ad nauseam* on the Internet Contest Reflector. It will be a relief to see the end of this activity!

Congratulations to all—*The DXer* hopes you got what you wanted. As for me, I still like my callsign—and I won't need to change my license plate, e-mail address or QSL's.

—N16T

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A Stellar Event in November

The November meeting of the NCDXC will be held on Friday, the 15th at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo. The presentation by Chuck Vaughn, AA6G will feature something different and out-of-this-world: astrophotography.

"Astrophotography," says Chuck, "is quite unlike amateur radio and DXing but equally fascinating." Chuck's goals are to provide some insight into what is required of a successful astrophotographer and to share with us some of the wonders of the universe he has recorded on film using several small telescopes.

For ten years, Chuck has been photographing objects outside the solar system—primarily galaxies and nebulae. Unlike conventional photography, astrophotography requires exposures up to several hours. "The objects are often little more than faint patches of light in the camera and sometimes cannot be seen at all," he says. "Yet, on film, they reveal themselves as incredibly detailed clouds of glowing gas intermingled with dust and clusters of millions of stars."

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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: Ted Algren, KA6W
 Vice President: Doug Westover, W6JD
 Secretary: Peter Gerba, KN6BI
 Treasurer: Gordon Girton, W6NLG
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 Records Manager: Ron Panton, W6VG
 Publications Mgr: Ron Panton, W6VG
 Contest Manager: Vacant

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-

General Meeting

The monthly NCDXC meeting was held on October 11 at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo and was called to order by VP Doug Westover, W6JD at 8 PM. President Ted Algren, KA6W was out of town.

This was the 50th Anniversary meeting of the Northern California DX Club and was well-attended. In deference to the special occasion, club business matters were kept to a minimum. Gordon, W6NW (ex-W6NLG) gave a brief treasurer's report. Steve Shaffer, KD6GC was reinstated to membership. Doug then concluded Club business and showed a video — "The Last Signal from Kuwait."

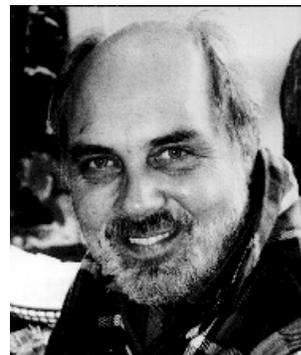
Bill, W6TEX introduced our Special Guest for the evening, NCDXC Charter member Jack Holmes, W6BUY. Jack—now age 90 and living in Reno—spoke to the members of the early days of radio, DX and life in the SF Bay Area. Jack gave his audience a real feel for the breadboard electronics, big wire antennas, and 50-watt rigs he couldn't afford, and the beginnings of the NCDXC. Jack, in the care of Chuck, K6RK, went home with a bottle of champagne as a memento of the occasion.

A leggy blonde YL DXer from the past named Marilyn then entered the room looking for several of her "favorites." "Where's W6BUY?" "Oh, hi Rubin, how's DX?" "Oh there's K6LM...I gotta go say hi...and ask Jim about the true meaning of DX." About then, W6TEX asked to have the air-conditioning turned on.

Marilyn seated herself on W6JD's lap and sang happy 50th birthday to the NCDXC. (Garry, N16T has photos...he and Doug are still negotiating for the negatives. Rumor has it that the last offer was an old IC765 that has spent most of its recent life in the repair shop.)

Cake and coffee were served. The meeting was adjourned.

—Peter Gerba, KN6BI, Secretary



Whiskey Shots

Our 50th Anniversary is well underway. It's easy to tell—W6TI has been ablaze with more activity than I can remember. *Keep it up, folks!* I have had a QSO with thirty of you to date and look forward to making at least 20 more Q's to qualify for the Repeater Award.

Now that November is here, start your 50-Country QSO's on the 15, 12 and 10 meter bands. The clock is running! Check your September *DXer* for particulars and *go get 'em!*

The Christmas party announcement and reservation form are on page 7. Review your personal calendars and plan to attend, as we will have some great food and entertainment. Ken, N6RO and his *Devil Mountain Jazz Band* will perform. The "DMB" is great fun to watch, listen and dance-your-%@#-off to. Yes, I said *dance*: our hobby is often rather sedentary.

Let's all try to attend this gala affair. Your V.P.—Doug, W6JD—has worked hard to assemble this event for us to enjoy.

Give some thought to what you might like to have for up-coming NCDXC meeting programs. Pass your suggestions to our editor or me via landline, e-mail or snail-mail.

—Ted Algren, KA6W, President



Update: Changes to 50th Awards

Due primarily to poor propagation, it has turned out to be more difficult than anticipated to earn a 50th anniversary mug. Since a goal of the celebration is to award a *lot* of commemorative mugs at the end of the anniversary year, the rules have been relaxed a bit.

Effective immediately, here is how to qualify for a free mug:

1. Work 50 NCDXC members on the club repeater during the anniversary year which began on October 10, 1996 and ends on October 10, 1997. Many members have already accomplished this and many more are well on their way. As before, if you are out of range of the repeater this requirement is waived.
2. During the anniversary year, work different 50 DXCC countries in one calendar month on one band. The qualifying months are November, 1996 through September, 1997. Even with poor propagation, 20, 30 and 40 meters can be quite good. This should be easy to achieve for almost anyone, since DX contests occur throughout the year. Keep a log of your contacts to submit for your mug.

Extra Credit. We have decided to present a second award to any member who works 50 different DXCC countries in any 50-hour period during the anniversary year. You may choose a contest weekend, a period of good propagation during the week—or whatever works best for you—right to the end of the anniversary year. It has not yet been decided what the award will be: stay tuned!

A few reminders:

- We are still soliciting club members to use the club callsign, W6TI from their own stations for one-week periods during the anniversary year. If you have not signed up, contact Bill, W6TEX for details.
- Don't forget that DX stations are looking for NCDXC members to work for their 50th anniversary certificate. You may sign /50 after your call to identify yourself as a NCDXC member.

Please contact me with any questions you may have about the 50th anniversary program.

—Chuck Vaughn, AA6G

Vanity Callsign Database Corrupted!

Well, I didn't get my information from just anyone, but rather from a source who will only be identified as the Inside Person at the Skunk Works. This source says that the FCC computers at Gettysburg are simply not up to the task, so—as an election-time example of interagency cooperation—the whole thing got ported to the more powerful machines at the FBI. So far, so good. However, when attempting to generate a random number using samples of white noise taken from the upper atmosphere, the Vanity database became intertwined with the one the FBI uses for its Witness Protection Program.

My Inside Person tells me that this leads to some good news and some other news for all amateur applicants later this week. The good news is that each amateur applicant will get to keep his original callsign. The other news is that he will be issued a new identity.

In my case, for example, I'll continue to be N8AAT, only I've been renamed Varko Cranston. I'm no longer a Professor of Latin American Literature at the University of Toledo, but have been transferred to Memphis where I am now a researcher in a program sponsored by a prominent pharmaceutical company in the ever-expanding field of cryogenic proctology.

Be certain to check the appropriate Web sites every opportunity you get, to find out

Treasurer's Report

October 1, 1996

Income:

Dues	\$24.00	
Total		\$24.00

Expenses:

DX'er		
Copy Cost	\$331.37	
Postage	233.60	
Meeting Room	50.00	
50th Birthday	<u>492.98</u>	
Total		\$1,107.95

CD's

Great Western Bank	\$20,199.98	
1st Nationwide Bank	\$10,053.46	

Checking (B of A):

Club	\$6,660.31	
DX Convention	<u>3,500.00</u>	
Total Cash		\$40,413.75

Club Members as of October 1

Charter	4	
Honorary	10	
Life	32	
Family 4X2	8	
Associate	5	
Absentee	24	
Full	<u>223</u>	
Total	306	

—Gordon Girton, W6NW, Treasurer

Roster Changes

Changed phone numbers

Phil Noyes, KM6RM

delete work number

FAX (510) 351-0177

Eveline Noyes, KM6KO

FAX (510) 351-0177

Correction

In the *DX Ladder* listings in the September and October issues of *The DXer*, K6KLY should have been listed in the top spot for six meters, with 72 countries confirmed.

—AA6YQ

Topband Pileup Management in Europe

The standard of 160 metre operating by us Europeans is sinking even lower, to the point where co-channel working by DX stations is all but impossible. Any slightly-rare station that appears on the band answering CQs results in the whole band from 1820 to 1840 being filled every few hundred Hz with stations madly calling CQ, covering up any other DX with the resultant clicks and carrier noise.

If the DX station has the temerity to stand still and call CQ, then immediately what seems like several hundred stations begin calling incessantly, and there is never a gap in the transmissions for anyone to listen. The game seems to be to send your callsign lots of times, then listen and check to see if the channel is clear, then immediately call again if someone else is still sending. If nobody is sending, you must send your callsign again anyway and repeat the process until it is several minutes since anyone has heard the DX.

The next part of the performance is that the DX sends a partial call like G4D?? and this is the cue for about a third of all the stations calling to start the same process of call/listen/start-calling again because someone else is still sending (or not sending). This phase of the game is characterised once more by the objective of being, at all costs, the last person still sending.

Eventually, the third phase starts, with the pile-up police helping everyone out with helpful comments and ensuring that the DX still cannot be heard. If by some fluke the DX station succeeds in being heard, then the third phase of the game is ruined. As tempers flare and the language used becomes somewhat intemperate, a sudden change in the rules takes place as everyone remembers that the original point of the game was to work this DX station, so everyone listens for two seconds. This is always very carefully

timed to occur just as the DX station is sending "599 BK."

It is vital that nobody hears the actual callsign being sent, otherwise that person has to send "5NN TU" and leave the game. At this point he may choose to become a policeman to assist others in prolonging the game. In order to maintain momentum, several players should immediately send their callsigns, followed by "5NN 5NN TU" or similar. The DX station should respond to this by sending "QRZ?" or just "?" Advanced players will realise that the three callers are in fact bluffing and thus the second and third phases are repeated, prompted by the police sending "RX?" or "LID" or another suitable phrase. This is the cue for the remaining players to resume sending, and the game continues in this loop until about ten minutes after the DX station has left the arena for greener pastures, complaining of QRM and lack of activity.

Any DX station trying to work EU on 160 and not working split must enjoy suffering. Starting to work co-channel and then going split once the pileup appears to be getting out of control is a recipe for disaster. The initial cluster spots will not say "split" and will take several minutes to propagate throughout the whole EU system. The DX station's instructions will not be heard once the pileup reaches this level as there will be no gaps in sending at all (I am serious here—it is truly amazing to listen to!) Working up 1 kHz is very popular, but that usually puts your pileup on top of another DX station and allows the clicks and noise from all those kilowatts to flatten even the toughest front ends.

May I humbly suggest a solution to this problem and also to another serious problem we have in EU? A bunch of extremely ill-mannered OZ stations and a few friends in other countries have taken to creating deliberate QRM to the CW DX band by talking incessantly with no

callsigns on 1837 every evening. Landing a huge pileup on 1834 and up will eventually persuade them to go away (although they then tend to move to 1832, which is even worse, of course). If the DX stations send on a frequency in the 1826-1833 area and listen on 1835-1838, then we will have a much better chance of hearing them in this very hostile radio environment, and in addition might persuade these militant chaps to take their argument with the Danish FCC elsewhere.

A simple way used to good effect by a lot of successful DX operators is to work on 1826-28 and listen ten up. Another tip for DX stations trying to work EU is to avoid the spot frequencies 1825, 1827 and 1836 as there are big carriers on those channels much of the time and the incessant CQ machines usually sit on the integer kilohertz. Working on 25.5, 26.5, 27.5 etc. really does make for much more successful operations (the 1827/1836 carriers seem to be broadcast station mixing products and vary a lot according to location). A DX station may only be hearing a few stations in the pile, but—rest assured—there will be many, many others using small antennas and low power who are putting S9+ signals into everyone's receivers, and others with big signals who cannot hear the DX but are calling anyway.

With openings often being very short, anything that speeds up the rate can only be good for 160 operating standards and a general reduction in blood pressure. A brief listen to one of the DXpedition operating masters (they know who they are—I shall not embarrass them by identification here) should be compulsory for all DX ops who are brave or foolish enough to expose themselves to the ravages of the EU LF ratpack. Even such a simple thing as sending the callsign of the station you are working before *and after* the 5NN when the pile gets out of hand is a great

The Phantom Spark Signal

The year was 1920 and the person involved (not yet in his teens), had been licensed for only a few months. He had not as yet assembled the necessary parts for a transmitter but did have a receiver of sorts. The latter was comprised of a tuner wound on one of his mother's rolling pins with wire untwisted from a "twisted pair" phone line, a condenser, a galena detector and a pair of Murdock headphones. This primitive receiver did bring in signals from ships and marine shore stations because, unknown to the builder, the tuner just happened to hit 600 meters. No ham signals were heard, however. But, after today, this would no longer be the case.

It happened that our friend had relatives in Marin whom he often visited. Such trips called for a long streetcar ride down Market Street to the Ferry Building and passed by a certain store that always had window displays of ham wireless equipment. The store was near the Ferry Building, so that on his return from Marin he always walked up to admire one particular item, a Loose Coupler. It was truly a thing of beauty, with its shiny black bakelite supports, its bright nickel-plated metallic elements and above all, the bright green, silk-covered enameled wire coil windings!

This very day, he had counted out the nickels, dimes and quarters he had been saving for months. As I recall, it came to about ten dollars, big money in those early days but short of the price that he thought the coupler might cost. The family, realizing how badly he wanted this new wireless instrument, emptied the cookie jar and came up with another two dollars. And so it was that he appeared at Hal-Cun Wireless with a bag of coins. It's dim in my memory, but I think the price of the Loose Coupler was fifteen dollars, more than the amount he had hoped for. But as luck would have it, they took his twelve dollars and he took the Coupler. He would never know whether their willingness to sell was prompted by the fact that the bright green insulation was getting faded by the sun or whether the new variometers would soon replace the Couplers. Before leaving the subject, I will tell you that a complete tuner with its several dials and switches sold for about \$55 in 1920!

And so came the night of this eventful day. He connected the new Coupler to the rest of his gear and to aerial and ground binding posts on the Coupler, put on the 'phones and began to manipulate the slider on the outer coil and the tap switch on the inner, moveable coil and listened. Nothing—absolutely nothing! He fiddled with the catwhisker on the galena detector—but still not a trace of signal was heard in the

Marin whom he often visited. Such trips called for a long streetcar ride down Market Street to the Ferry Building and passed by a certain store that always had window displays of ham wireless equipment. The store was near the Ferry Building, so that on his return from Marin he always walked up to admire one particular item, a Loose Coupler. It was truly a thing of beauty, with its shiny black bakelite supports, its bright nickel-plated metallic elements and above all, the bright green, silk-covered enameled wire coil windings!

As he sat trying to think what could possibly be wrong, there was suddenly a faint signal. Yes, there it was—V,V,V de 6—! Another series of V's...and then silence. He made every possible adjustment on the Coupler and the crystal detector but heard nothing! He was about to give up when he heard a knock on the door. He opened it and there stood two young men. One man spoke. "I am Frank Flanin and this is my friend Harry McMann." He went on, "Harry and I were walking up Castro street and saw your aerial. We thought that you might be an amateur and we should drop in and say hello. "Of course you wouldn't know, but Harry lives on the corner of Sixteenth and Castro, only three houses from you." So far, Frank did all the talking and our friend, being in awe of this experienced amateur, said little after asking them in.

Frank continued his story: Harry had worked for Haller-Cunningham—a firm that supplied wireless equipment to ships. During the course of his tenure with this company, Harry had acquired a complete spark station comprised of gear replaced by more modern versions. He lacked only a rotary spark gap which he had eventually constructed. He had everything in a room in his attic, connected and ready for test. However, he did not have a license and so invited his former schoolmate Frank, who had a ham license, to come over for the tryout. In due course, Frank arrived and he and Harry climbed the stairs to the attic room where the gear was located. Frank switched on the motor for the rotary spark gap and pressed the key.

Frank continued the story: "To start with, the big motor on the gap shook the old wooden house, adding to the noise and confusion. I then pressed the key and sent a few 'V's and my call. In the confined

attic area the noise of the spark was deafening. When I started the next series of V's, Harry's mother screamed up the stairway, 'stop that noise immediately—you'll wake everyone in the neighborhood!' Of course, we did stop and I must admit it was so loud that my ears are still ringing." He continued, "Since yours is only three houses from Harry's on the corner, I don't understand why you didn't hear it!"

The young man later found that he had connected the aerial to the ground terminal on the coupler.

—C.F. "Bud" Bane, W6WB

Kudos

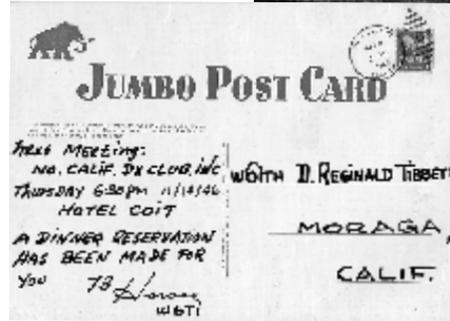
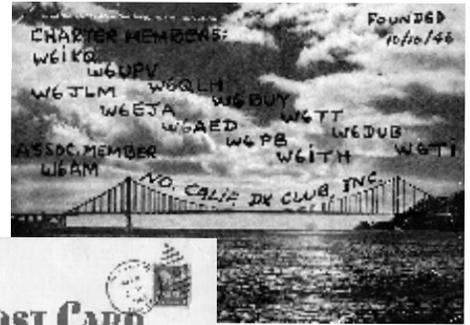
- Thanks to Bill, W6TEX, for his efforts to provide a great 50th Birthday celebration at the October NCDXC Meeting. Tell us, Bill—how did you find Marilyn?
- Thanks to Chuck, K6RK, for bringing founder Jack, W6BUY to the meeting from the airport and for providing a place for him to stay.
- Thanks to Smitty, W6JZU and his panel—Glenn, W6OTC, Garry, NI6T and Rusty, W6OAT—for presenting a DX Forum at Pacificon in October.
- Special thanks to Chuck, AA6G, and his committee for their work to make the 50th Anniversary Celebration a success!

—KA6W

50th Anniversary Meeting!



Perks of high office: Club VP W6JD gets his shoulders rubbed and ears warmed by "Marilyn"



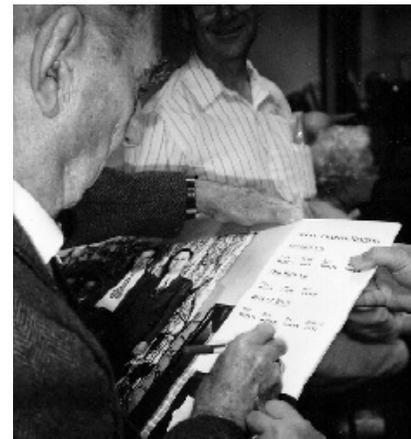
W6ITH's invitation to the second NCDXC meeting, November, 1946



Former NCDXC presidents gather around Charter Member Jack Holmes, W6BUY



Hal, N6AN, 85 in August, with Bip, W6BIP, 85 in November. Happy Birthday, kids!



Jack, W6BUY, 90, rekindles old memories (L), displays his red badge of courage, (C) and signs the photo of the Charter Members (R.)

New NCDXF Officers

President: Len Gerald, K6ANP
Vice President: Bob Vallio, W6RGG
Secretary: Tom McShane, NW6P
Treasurer: Bruce Butler, W6OSP
Directors: Eric Edberg, W6DU
Jack Troster, W6ISQ
Dick Dievendorf, AA6MC
Rusty Epps, W6OAT
Dave Leeson, W6QHS
Steve Thomas, N6ST
Lou Beaudet, K6TMB

Advisors: Jim Maxwell, W6CF
Merle Parten, K6DC
Bob Fabry, N6EK
Ron Steiner, K6KEO
Bob Ferrero, W6RJ
Al Lotze, W6RQ
Bud Bane, W6WB
Howard Brainen, WZ6Z

Congratulations to all from NCDXC!

First to Work 50?

Who will be the first DX operator to work 50 NCDXC members in our 50th Anniversary year?

The leading candidate may be Teresa, PT2TF, who was spotted on 14.193 calling for NCDXC members by Don, KO6GI. When last heard, she was up over 30,

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November Meet-

Chuck will demonstrate the equipment used, discuss how to find "dark" skies and share some of the trials and tribulations of the hobby.

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. Dinner (optional) is from 6:30; the meeting is at 8 PM. Guests and interested parties are always welcome.

Gala NCDXC Christmas Party!

Come one, come all! Bring yourself and guest(s) for an evening of good food, music and dancing.

*

Tuesday, December 10, 6:30pm - 11:00 pm

No host bar 6:30 - 7:30

Dinner at 7:30.

*

Where? Martinelli's Steak Pit
1180 El Camino Real, Millbrae

*

Whats to Eat? Choice of:

8oz Prime Rib

Coq-au-vin

(chicken in red wine with pearl onions and mushroom caps)

Filet of Sole

*

All entrees include a green salad, relish tray, pasta, vegetables, cheese, French bread and butter, coffee, tea or de-cafe, ice cream. Wine is served with dinner.

*

Whats does it cost? \$20.00 including tax & tip.

*

Whats the entertainment? Dancing, or just listening, to Ken Keeler's (N6RO) Devil Mountain Jazz Band

Fill out the form below and mail to:

Doug Westover, W6JD

717 Los Robles

Palo Alto, CA 94306

Make your check payable to NCDXC.

I MUST have your reservation by Dec. 6!

Detailed directions to Martinelli's will appear on packet and in the December DXer.

YES! I am attending the NCDXC Christmas Dinner Meeting!

Name _____ Call Sign _____

Entree Choices: Number attending _____

_____ Prime Rib

_____ Coq au vin (Chicken)

_____ Filet of Sole

_____ Total number of dinners @ \$20.00

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
