

Board Meeting Minutes



April 10, 1996

The April Minutes of the Sonoma County Radio Amateurs board meeting held at the North Bay Savings Bank on Marlow Rd. Members of the board present were: President, Steve KK6VY; Vice President, Rick K6ZWB; Secretary, Steven KD6CJR; Treasurer, Joel KJ6LF; Member-at-large, Claude AB6OL; Member-at-large, Joe KE6LNQ; Repeater Chairman and Past President, Kelly KD6CJQ; Activities Committee Chairman, John W6TLK and Public Service Chairman, Marie KI6QY. There were also 8 other SCRA members present.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by President Steve KK6VY.

A motion was placed before the board to place Kelly KD6CJQ as the Repeater Chairman. KJ6LF/K6ZWB Motion carried.

Steve KK6VY thanks those individuals who thought up the new ideas for refreshments at the monthly meeting. Need to get certificates for Homebrew contest completed.

Rick K6ZWB is interested in incorporating demonstrations and seminars into our swap meet to make them more interesting. This would mean a probable move from our current site to have room. Please call Rick if you have any ideas.

Claude AB6OL is looking for someone to take over the VE Liaison position for the club.

Marie KI6QY has new information for the Super Cities walk. It is in the mail. Wine Country information is in the mail also. There are several PS events scheduled for June. One on Field Day.

John W6TLK has submitted a letter to Two Rock leadership to get approval to use W2AIR for the Armed Forces day special event. Let's support John in this effort. Field day planning is quickly approaching. Need KD6CJR to send a letter to reserve sight.

Joel KJ6LF Northbay Savings Bank in changing to Bank of the West. No major impact on club finances. Placed caller ID blocking on the repeater phone line. Went over current budget transactions.

Steve KD6CJR distributed current roster information to Control Ops and Board Members. The complete roster will

be published in Short Skip in a month or two.

Ken N6MHG is considering putting a SCRA Web Page together. Pacific division has a web site and would link to this one.

Joe KM6TN has been working with the city of Santa Rosa on the Antenna ordinance.

Kelly KD6CJQ has contacted several places and has gotten some favorable quotes on some of the equipment that is needed to upgrade the repeater sites. There was also discussion regarding repeater slots. There will be a deadline selected for clearing any non-current members from the slots. Plenty of notice will be given. Also noted was only 707 numbers may be dialed with the auto-patch.

Respectfully submitted by Steven Feil, KD6CJR, Secretary.

Foxhunt Report

by Steven Feil, KD6CJR

A Fox Hunt was held March 16 starting at the Piner parking lot. Steve KK6VY and Kelly KD6CJQ were the Rabbits and Bill KH6GJV, Phil KC6BSI and I, Steve KD6CJR, were the Foxes. Phil was the only one of the group that had any real experience at transmitter hunting and had a really nice setup. His equipment included a 2 meter beam antenna mounted to a short mast, his hand held radio and a clipboard with a map and clear plastic cover for plotting bearings from his compass which was attached to his antenna mast. Bill had a small loop to go with his hand held. I had a foil covered newspaper tube in which to insert my hand held.

Considering the novice level of our group we decided to work together and we all contributed to the success of the day. Phil was able to get a bearing and direction using his more directional antenna. Bill and I could confirm that there was a signal coming from the general southerly direction. So we decided on a second location to take a bearing from and off we went. Destination - Santa Rosa Plaza for its elevation. We were able to confirm that we were on the right track from there. The signal was stronger and the direction of the signal the same. So off to the NE edge of Rohnert Park for another stop.

Now it was getting tougher to agree on where to go next. From the valley floor and near the hills to the east we were

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getting some conflicting signals. We headed a little West near Sonoma State to get a better angle. From there we decided to head up Roberts and Lichau Road. Up Lichau Road there are several side roads. We initially went up a road and the signal got weaker and more to the South. When we corrected our direction up the other road we got super results. The signal was stronger. So strong in fact that the beam was all but useless. A good variable attenuator would have helped.

This is where my foil tube started to play a role. By inserting it into the tube and shielding it with my body I was able to null the signal, the direction being directly behind me. At the end of this road we found a couple of nice hiking trails. Our initial thought was, "Steve, Kelly, hiking to hide from us. NO WAY!!" But the signals were drawing us on. Even with my antenna partially off its mount the signal was too strong to get a bearing. I got a small piece of wire from Bill, about 1.5 inches long. This 'antenna' was weak enough to get us further down the trail. I eventually had to cut it down to less than 1/2".

At one point on the trail we broke out into the open. The bearings that I was getting were across a big valley. The trail went almost in the opposite direction. Just as we were about to concede defeat I noticed a glint across the valley. "What color is Steve's new truck?" "White," Bill said. "Isn't that it up on that hill?" "I don't see you. How can you see us?" was Steve's reply when we contacted him on the radio. It took some convincing and some arm waving but he finally believed us. They were nearly to the top of Sonoma Mt. Road at the .91 repeater site. We were less than 3/4 mile apart as the crow flies, but at least 15 miles away by car. Although we didn't get to the sight, we did identify it, and that is the purpose of transmitter hunting, isn't it?

Following the tradition of the winners putting on the next hunt, we are tentatively planning for the next one to be in July sometime. Hope to hear you then.

ARRL Pacific Division Update

by Brad Wyatt, K6WR, Director, Pacific Division, ARRL

LONG-DISTANCE RESCUE MISSION SUCCESSFUL

Collins enthusiast Bob Karon, AA6RK, of Encino, California, was checking out some repairs and modifications to his vintage gear around midnight March 18 when a routine evening of radio suddenly turned dramatic. While working a Florida station using his Collins setup, Karon heard the distress call from

the 44-foot Canadian yacht Cambria, which had run aground and was sinking in the Caribbean Sea, some 150 miles southwest of Jamaica. "The signal was weak and fading," Karon reports. "I had to hold my breath sometimes to hear it." The Cambria's skipper, Kenneth Cunningham, told Karon the vessel was almost on its side and the antenna nearly in the water. When Karon discerned the vessel's position, he telephoned the US Coast Guard. The Coast Guard could not hear the Cambria's weak signal, but was able to contact a merchant vessel 25 miles away from the distressed craft. Karon, a freelance musician, stayed on the air for the next three hours, the only connection between the merchant ship and the Cambria. "I reassured the panicky crew that help was on the way and relayed instructions from the Coast Guard and the rescue ship," he said. The merchant ship eventually was able to dispatch a lifeboat to the Cambria and rescued all four crew members. Captain Robert C. Gravino, chief of the US Coast Guard's Search and Rescue Branch, cited Karon for "professional and humanitarian actions assisting mariners in distress. A job well done."--Harvey Laidman, N6HL

13-YEAR-OLD HAM HANDLES EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Vince Bernotas III, N2WXE, an active member of Burlington County (New Jersey) ARES/RACES, turned out to be in the right place at the right time on March 17, and a dirt-bike racer is glad he was. Vince, 13, and his parents were among those helping to provide communication for the 1996 Sandy Lane Motorcycle Enduro, a 100-mile dirt bike endurance race through the South Jersey pine barrens. After an Enduro rider hit a tree a mile from Vince's checkpoint, N2WXE assisted in locating the paralyzed rider, believed to have a fractured back, then coordinated response of an ambulance and emergency vehicles, including a rescue helicopter. Complicating matters was a catastrophic radio failure in both the ambulance and state police cruiser. Amateur Radio saved the day when N2WXE forwarded urgent information about the patient's location and condition to net control Doug McCray, K2QWQ, who relayed the vital information to dispatchers. The rider is reported to be recovering. An active ARRL member since he got his ticket three years ago, Vince is net control for the K2AA/South Jersey Radio Association's Hams R Us Kids Net (see QST Nov 94, p 69).--Vince Bernotas II, N2WXF

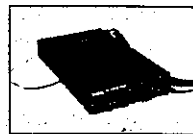
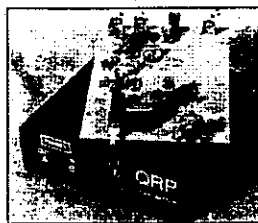
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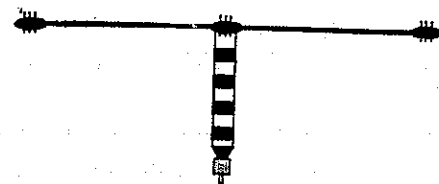
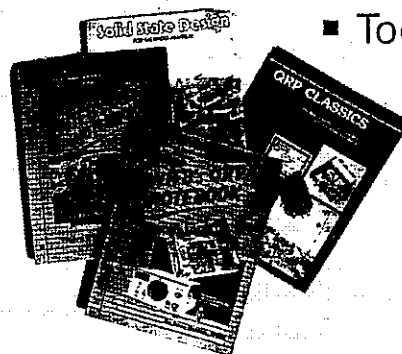
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- QRP CW Transmitters
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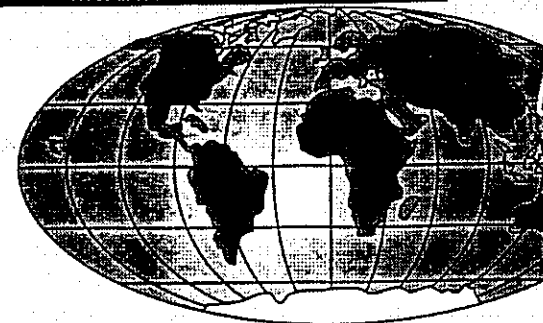
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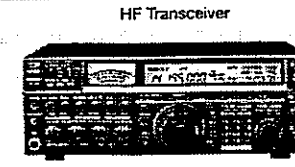
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SCRAPS

SCRA PUBLIC SERVICE

By Marie Mappus KI6QY



The first event of the year is now behind us with more coming up in May. It was a delightful day for a walk through Santa Rosa. The spring flowers and trees were in bloom and the weather was warm. My thanks to Kelly KC6CJQ, Angela KC6OCD, Nadine KC6WUI, Hank W6DTV, Sarah N6FAX, Dave KD6KWM, Gary KD6BOF, Adam KD6POC, Tim KD6TXH, John KE6RMC and Ted KB6PTA who all gave their talent and energy to making the event a success.

The next event is the Wine Country Century on May 4. Followed by the Human Race on May 11. Robert WA6WXX will be coordinating the Human Race. If you are interested in helping, call Robert at 528-6869 and let him know. He will also be asking for volunteers at the May meeting.

June has the Mini Vineman on June 9, the masters National on the 19-21 and the Terrible Two on the 22nd. Call me at 664-1978 if you are interested in any of these events and be sure to mark your calendar. At this time I have no further information about the Masters National than the dates. I will keep you posted as I receive further information.

Some of you already indicated that you are interested in participating in particular events. I have placed your name under the requested event and you are included. You will not be contacted until closer to the date, but do not be concerned, "You are on the list" and I will assign you a position. I appreciate your interest. It makes my job easier.

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Attention all hands!

I have just obtained a letter from FCC authorizing the use of N6S as the call of the Valley of the Moon Amateur Radio Club for the BEAR FLAG SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION. The authorization is for the period of June 14 to July 9, 1996. A special Bear Flag QSL card will be available to those who work the special event station. A schedule of operation and frequencies will follow. N6S will be active during the Field Day weekend. Digital modes, VHF/UHF and QRP operations are contemplated as well as the usual SSB/CW operations on HF.

73, Ken McTaggart N6KM,
Club station trustee, VOMARC

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Sierra Transceiver Review...continued from page 1

I haven't had much time to operate the radio yet, but it seems to work beautifully. The receiver performs like a "real" ham radio and is infinitely better than the direct-conversion designs common on some older-QRP transceivers. The low-frequency local oscillator is stable and accurate. The main tuning dial includes an 8:1 gear-reduction drive, making fine-tuning easy. Dial resolution is 5 kHz, with typically +/- 1 or 2 kHz accuracy.

Wilderness Radio is a new company that seems to specialize in repackaging Northern California QRP Club homebrew projects as kits. In addition to the Sierra, they also offer a 40-meter-only QRP rig called the NorCal 40A for \$129. Several of these were successfully built in SCRA's recent construction class with good success.

Cost: \$245/\$269/\$295/\$369 with 1/2/3/6 band modules. Wilderness Radio, POB 734, Los Altos CA 94023. (415) 494-3806 (9AM-6PM).

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AMATEUR RADIO GOES TO GRAD SCHOOL

Graduate student Bella Romain, N4ILQ, of Carrollton, Georgia, has a healthy curiosity. For a while now, she's been wondering what makes hams willingly go out of their way to help during emergencies. Combining avocation and academe, Bella has made that question the focus of her master's degree thesis in psychology at West Georgia College in Carrollton. "The fact that the FCC mentions public service as part of the reason for Amateur Radio's existence is obviously not the whole story," she said. "It is not easy to leave the comfort and security of a warm bed to drive out into a storm to help set up an emergency shelter."

A ham for more than 25 years, Bella speaks from some experience. Since she and her husband, Stewart, KF4WC, moved to Carrollton 13 years ago, they have become active in the public service sphere of Amateur Radio. They took a first-responder course, as well as numerous Red Cross disaster-training classes "so that if we are in the field providing emergency communications, we will be better prepared to handle any kind of emergency," she explained. She reports her Amateur Radio club, the West Georgia Amateur Radio Society, works closely with emergency-management agencies, the Red Cross, and the National Weather Service "as the need arises." Club members worked with the Red Cross to provide damage assessments and communication following Hurricane Opal. They also helped with emergency shelter operations.

Bella says it's not easy to endure the tedium of long hours at an emergency communication headquarters, nor to give up leisurely weekends and evenings to take courses to be better prepared for emergencies. She says she began to wonder "what hams experience and feel during the times they participate in providing emergency help, and what some of their thoughts and reasons were for doing this." To find out, as part of the information-gathering phase of her research project, Bella is asking hams to fill out a questionnaire. She'll then select a number of hams for in-depth follow-up interviews. Among other things, the questionnaire delves into respondents' emergency communication experiences and asks them to rate both their level of personal comfort and personal safety while responding during an emergency.

For more information, or to obtain a copy of the survey to complete, contact Bella Romain, N4ILQ, 285 Timber Ridge Trail, Carrollton, GA 30117-8884; tel 770-834-5674; fax 770-830-9481 or e-mail

bella@mindspring.com.

OL' SOL MAINTAINS A SPOTLESS REPUTATION

From solar observer Tad Cook, KT7H, in Seattle, Washington, comes the now-familiar word that solar activity remains very low. The sunspot count was zero on March 30 and 31. Over the next few weeks, Cook says we can expect solar flux to remain near 70, with possible mild geomagnetic disturbances centered around April 17. On the air, 20 meters should be the best daytime band, but solar activity is expected to be too low to sustain much propagation on 15 meters or above. For worldwide communication at night, 40 meters is the top choice, but the low solar activity makes this the best time of the solar cycle for 160 meters, too.

The latest projections, based on current conditions and previous solar cycles, suggest that we will be at the sunspot number minimum for the next few months. The minimum is centered around April through June of this year, with sunspot numbers in February 1997 reaching fall 1995 levels. Previous forecasts have mentioned a 10.7-cm solar flux minimum centered around spring of 1997, but the latest projection moves that period up a bit. What it shows is a minimum based on an average flux of 72 for October 1996 through February 1997, with the flux also averaging 72 for June 1996.

Spring of 1998 should present a radically different picture. By then, the average flux will climb toward 100, and 10, 12 and 15 meters should be alive with activity again. By April 1999, the average solar flux is projected to be 158, rising to 192 a year later! The next cycle is projected to peak near the turn of the century--in August 2000.

The ARRL Letter is published by the American Radio Relay League, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111; tel 860-594-0200; fax 860-594-0259. Rodney J. Stafford, KB6ZV, President; David Sumner, K1ZZ, Executive Vice President.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the radio replacement fund for Michael N6WRM, please send c/o Steve Onines @ 114 Veronda Way, Cotati, CA 94931-5368.

Activities Committee:			
Public Service:	Marie Mappus	KI6QY	664-1978
Public Relations:	Steve Carniglia	KK6VY	579-9608
QSL Mgr:	Fred Leoni	N6YEU	431-8202
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RACES RO:	Jim Pelmulder	N6PTM	823-7947
Field Day:	Steve Carniglia	KK6VY	579-9608
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ARRL dues: \$31/year, \$25 over 65 with proof of age. (Under 21 rates require application form).

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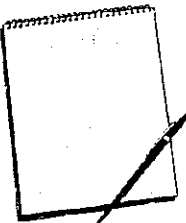
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- ☐ Teaching an upgrade class
- ☐ Helping with SCRA Flea Market
- ☐ Acting as club Net Control Station
- ☐ Helping with VEC license exams
- ☐ Field day, other operating events
- ☐ Helping with *Short Skip* Newsletter
- ☐ Other _____

SCRA MINUTES

April 3, 1996

Submitted by Secretary
Steven Feil KD6CJR



The meeting was called to order by President Steve Carniglia KK6VY at 7:35 PM in the Cattleman's banquet room. Other officers present were: Vice President Rick Reiner K6ZWB, Secretary Steve Feil KD6CJR, Treasurer Joel Nadler KJ6LF, Repeater Chairman Kelly Cureton KD6CJQ*, Activities Chairman John Wallack W6TLK, Public Service Chairman Marie Mappus KI6QY, Members-at-Large Claude Jones AB6OL and Joe Berkman KE6LNQ, Past President Kelly Cureton KD6CJQ. * New assignment

We had 6 visitors this evening.

Upgrades/New Calls: KF6CLE and KF6CLJ are new hams, congratulations!!

The minutes for the previous monthly meeting were approved as published in Short Skip. N6VUC/KD6FBN

The Treasurers report by Joel Nadler KJ6LF indicates income of \$2410.00, expenses of \$770.17 and a balance of \$3334.55.

Activities Committee Report, by Chairperson John Wallack W6TLK. Sat. May 18 is Armed Forces Day. Is there any interest in activating W2AIR at the Coast Guard Base as a special event station? John has a listing for A LOT of contests originating around the globe.

Education Report, by Bill KH6GJV. Bill says no instructors - no classes. Please help out. Tracy WB6TMY is still looking for students for an Extra class.

The SKM Bags repeater group is sponsoring code practice on their repeater. Plans for the future include automated sessions. For now listen at around 9:00 PDT for sessions put on by Steve KK6VY.

There will be a VE session on June 13 at HP.

Repeater Committee Report, by Kelly Cureton KD6CJQ. Notice the NEW name. Well it's true. Jim WB6PER has relocated to the Fort Bragg area and Kelly was asked by Steve KK6VY to fill his vacant position. In case you didn't notice the repeater site took a direct hit by lightning a couple of weeks ago. Do to the foresight of the Repeater group by having adequate protection, some outstanding support from equipment suppliers and a lot of luck it only cost \$35 and a few hours to get the repeater going. Thanks to ASTRON for the quick turnaround and to POLY PHASER for replacing the lightning protector for free!! A special THANKS to Chuck

N6DDK for donating a couple of surge strips. Kelly said it was FUN putting back together.

Public Service Committee Report, by Chairperson Marie KI6QY. Upcoming events include: Wine Country Century on May 4, Human Race on May 11, and Mini-Vineman on June 9. If you have signed up for and event please be patient, you will be contacted before the event occurs.

The Member of the Year plaque was presented to Harold KD6WYF as discussed at the March meeting. It will be presented to the selected individual each year.

SCRA Patches are available from the Treasurer for \$3.00.

Merl is now the Chief Radio officer. There will be a RACES drill on May 4 in conjunction with the Public Service event. RACES credit will be given to participants of either event. This will be a pre-scripted event designed by local RACES officials.

The recent Fox Hunt was discussed. Winners were Bill KH6GJV, Steve KD6CJR, and Phil KC6BSI. They will be in charge of the next SCRA Foxhunt.

Ed AB6QL reminded everyone about the Valley Of The Moon Hamfest on April 21 and invited all to attend the QRP night at the Coast Guard base on April 18.

Rick K6ZWB introduced the second Quarterly Raffle. The prize this time will be a portable GPS system. The drawing will be held during the June meeting. tickets are \$5.00 each.

Tracy WB6TMY is looking for a sight to relocate a remote transmitter. The transmitter has some TVI problems and so the sight should be isolated from potential interference problems.

Field day is quickly approaching. The sight will be at the Two Rock Coast Guard base again.

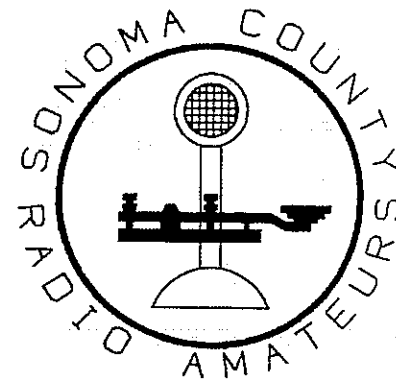
Larry KD6VUM is still working on the Alcatraz Mini-DXpedition. He will have a date by the 4/9 NET.

This months program was the annual SCRA Homebrew Contest. The winners this year were: Antenna Class - Marlow KE6CR and Non-Antenna - Rick K6ZWB

The raffle was conducted by Greg KE6FXK. Prizes were provided by ARDCO and HSC. Please patronize these fine establishments to show our thanks for this support.

James KD6GSF pulled James Hamilton KE6LPQ for the membership lottery.

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:50 PM. Respectfully submitted by Steven KD6CJR



Club Meetings

7:30 pm, 1st Wednesday each month at the Hewlett-Packard plant in Santa Rosa. (See map below) All are welcome.

NOT AN SCRA MEMBER?

If not, then this is a complimentary copy of *Short Skip*. Our club is involved with almost every area of Amateur Radio: Repeaters (146.73), Field Day, License classes (Novice through Extra), Volunteer exams, RACES, DX programs, Packet radio, Hidden transmitter hunts -- you name it.

OFFICERS FOR 1996

PRESIDENT:	Steve Carniglia	.....	KK6VY	.....	546-7370
VICE PRESIDENT:	Rick Reiner	.....	K6ZWB	.....	575-4455
SECRETARY:	Steven Feil	.....	KD6CJR	.....	579-8346
TREASURER:	Joel Nadler	.....	KJ6LF	.....	545-1782
MEMBERS-	Joe Berkman	.....	KE6LNQ	.....	763-2637
AT-LARGE:	Claude Jones	.....	AB6OL	.....	527-8593
REPEATER CHAIR:	Kelly Cureton	.....	KD6CJQ	.....	526-2972
ACTIVITIES CHAIR:	John Wallack	.....	W6TLK	.....	833-1873

SHORT SKIP STAFF

EDITOR:	Claude Jones	.....	AB6OL	.....	527-8593
(submissions) →	3612 Banyan Street, Santa Rosa, CA	95403-1557			
→	E-mail	ab6ol@aol.com		
ASSOCIATE EDITOR:	Shirley Jones	KD6PKA		
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AUDIO TAPING:	John Breckenridge	WB6FRZ		
	Laurel Meyer	KC6FKX		
	Bob Phillips	N6RMW		
SWAP SHOP EDITOR:	Greg Cowles	.....	KE6FXK	....	829-1583

Next Meeting: May 1, 1996

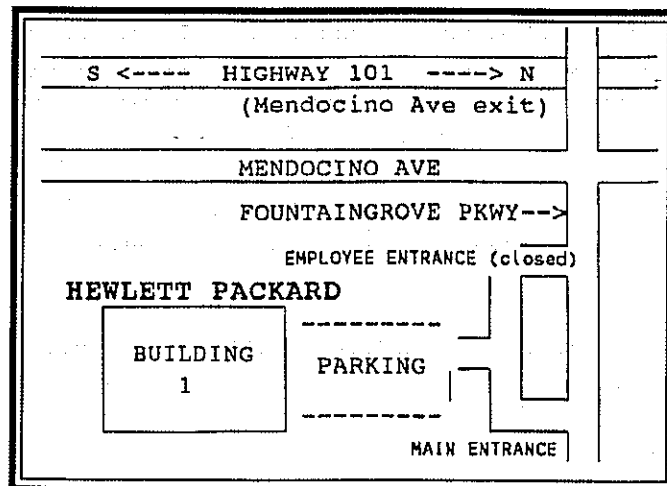
SHORT SKIP ADVERTISING RATES

Business Cards: \$10

\$11 First 1/4 Column
\$3 Additional 1/4 Columns
(\$32 Full Page, 1 side)

Pre-printed inserts: \$32/sheet

Guaranteed circulation: 200/month



We invite you to attend our next monthly meeting (see below) or check into the Tuesday night SCRA net on the 146.73 repeater at 7PM. You will hear the latest Amateur Radio Newline broadcasts, announcements of SCRA activities and a Swap Shop. Membership in SCRA is open to anyone interested in Amateur Radio. If you would like to join, there is a membership application in this issue. Hope we can have an "eyeball" QSO with you at the next meeting! 73 ...



HANK'S SWAP SHOP

Greg Cowles KE6FXK

252 Hutchins Ave. Sebastopol, CA 95472

Phone: 829-1583

FOR SALE

Yesu FT101EX, mic, owners manual, 600 Hz CW filter & added fan. \$350.00 Matt W2JEG @ 528-9288

ADI 200 2m HT, DC adaptor & speaker mic \$175.00 Mike KF6ALB @ (415) 359-3793

MFJ 422C Bencher paddle & keyer \$75.00. Scott KQ6AC @ 765-6579

DRSI PC board TNC for packet in computers \$70.00; Eico 5" scope, works \$30.00; Yesu FT200S transceiver, 80-10M with power supply, speakers & mobile power supply (\$Negotiable); Panasonic KXP1180 dot matrix printer, tractor feed \$75.00; Hitachi VHS, works (\$Negotiable); 3 element beam, 10-15-20M \$80.00. Hank W6DTV @ 823-7885

Icom 735 HF transceiver \$650.00; Swan 500, 80-10M, 500W \$225.00; Drake L75, 1200 W amp, 160-10M \$450.00. Rick @ 575-4455

Icom 451A 440 all mode \$350.00; Icom 251A 2M all mode \$350.00. Steve KD6FYK @ 869-2257

Icom 747 HF transceiver \$600.00; MFJ 1278B multi mode HF & 2M TNC \$200.00; DSP filters for MFJ 1278B \$200.00; MFJ 901 Versa Tuner 80-10M \$35.00; 2M amp, 30W in, 160W out \$150.00; 486DX2-66, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 112Mb hard disk, single speed CD-ROM \$600.00; HP500 ink jet printer \$150.00. Jim KD6WIS @ 584-3423

The Valley of the Moon ARC is making 20 kits of the Norcal 40-9er transceiver available to local hams for \$30 per kit. The rig is a 40 meter transceiver powered from a 9 volt battery and features VXO frequency control, QSK keying, 250 to 500 mW output and is sized to fit in a Sucrets or Altoids mints box. The kit comes with PC board, parts and an enclosure (an

Altoids box courtesy Frank Masten AB6SG). Contact Darrel Jones WD6BOR @ 996-4494 for information.

WANTED

2M crystal controlled radio. Chuck WL7SF @ 546-9189

20 amp or better power supply, continuous. Greg @ 829-1583

Be on the lookout for a Kenwood 732A faceplate, removed from the radio of Steven KD6CJR

Non-commercial ham ads printed free. Please call when item is sold. Ads run 2 months.

Upcoming VE Sessions

May 18 at 5:00pm

→ Petaluma (SMRS) at Petaluma Senior Citizen Center

TALK-IN 146.350 - RPT AAA MAP

PETALUMA K7

Take East Washington Street off ramp from 101 freeway. Go east on Washington to first signal (McDowell Blvd.). Left (north) on McDowell Blvd to first signallight, East Madison Ave. Turn right to Novak Drive. Turn left, building to left of circle. Park in back parking lot.

June 15 at 9:00am

→ Novato (MARC) at Kaiser Hospital, Building 2, San Rafael

WALK-IN 147.330 - RPT AAA MAP MARIN COUNTY E10

From Hwy 101 take Freitas Parkway west bound, turn left onto Gallinas Ave. Turn right onto Nova Albion Way, Right onto Montecillo Road and park in lot A. Enter building 2 at south door.



345 West College Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95401 (707) 527-8000

STEVE BASHAM
Manager

Are you ready for...



Field Day 1996?



Mark your calendars - June 22-23

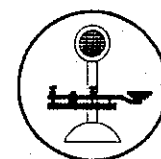
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Repeater Station
WB6PVS

Volume 21 #5

May 1996

Review of Wilderness Radio's Sierra Transceiver

by Al Bloom N1AL

The Sierra is a CW (Morse code) QRP (low power) transceiver kit. I bought it to use camping while on long-distance bicycle tours. For that purpose, I wanted a small, lightweight radio with low power supply current drain. The 2.8 x 6.6 x 7.0-inch Sierra weighs about 1.5 pounds, and draws only about 35 mA on receive. I plan to power it from a string of 8 AA penlight batteries.

You change bands by plugging in different band modules. The cabinet opens with a pair of quick-connect latches, making access to the band module connector easy. Besides eliminating the need for complicated band switching, this method allows you to pay for only the bands you need. Band modules cost \$31 each.

I was favorably impressed with the design. With some other ham radio kits I have seen, one look at the schematic was enough to convince me that I didn't want to operate (much less purchase!) the radio. The Sierra, on the other hand, has a well-designed superhet receiver with a 4-pole crystal filter (with adjustable bandwidth 150-1500 Hz), stable VFO, RIT (receiver incremental tuning) and audio-derived AGC. The 2-3 watt transmitter has solid-state T/R switching, which allows any desired break-in keying delay by changing one capacitor.

The hardware is also well thought out and uses good-quality components. The main PC board uses plated-through holes for reliability and is extensively silk-screened to make it easy to locate components. The front and rear panels are also nicely painted and silk-screened, making an attractive enclosure.

The manual is excellent. It leads you through the construction and alignment process, describing how to identify components

and pointing out possible pitfalls. I would rate this kit as "moderate" difficulty. Anyone who knows how to solder to PC boards and has at least a little experience building kits or other electronic hardware should have no trouble.

With most kits, the most time-consuming job is wiring up the connectors and cable harnesses. With the Sierra, there are no connectors or cables to wire, since all components, including the controls and connectors, mount on the main PC board. The most time-consuming job is winding the toroidal coils. It took me less than 8 hours to completely assemble and test the main unit and one band module. I received the kit in the mail on a Monday and worked JE1*** (Japan) on 40 meters Tuesday night.

Each band covers 150 kHz. Available bands include 80m (3.5 MHz), 40m (7 MHz), 30m (10 MHz), 20m (14 MHz), 17m (18 MHz) and 15m (21 MHz). The manual also includes parts information to build your own 160m (1.8 MHz), 12m (24.8 MHz) and 10m (28 MHz) modules. Band module PC boards with hardware but no components are available for \$9.50.

This radio is designed to be modified. Several possible modifications are mentioned in the manual, and there is plenty of blank front and rear panel space, and space inside the cabinet, to add your own gizmos. I plan to add an S meter, power/SWR bridge, front-panel bandwidth/QSK delay controls and keyer.

The optional KC1 keyer kit (\$45) is a tiny (0.8 x 2.5 inch) PC board that interfaces to solder pads provided on the Sierra main board. Construction is a little trickier than the Sierra because of the close-spaced components and PC traces. You'll have to drill your own holes in the front or rear panel to mount it. It has up to 4 memories for pre-programmed messages. It also includes a frequency counter function, adding digital frequency accuracy to your Sierra tuning dial. Readout is via Morse code!

Continued on page 4...