

ORCA NewsLetter

Oakland Radio Communication Association
Oakland, California

August 6, 2005

The next meeting will be on the first Saturday, August 6, 9:00 AM at Fire Station 1 media room, 1605 Martin Luther King at 17th Street, Oakland.

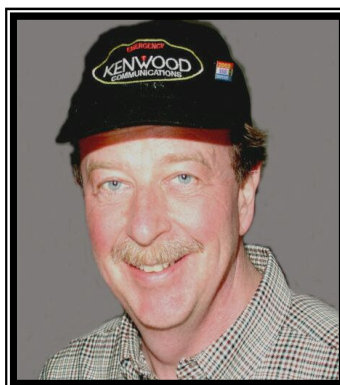
President's Corner

Special points of interest:

- Fire Patrol Thank You
- "Just So"
- SK Estate Sale

As many of you may already be aware, there are some dramatic changes on the horizon for our hobby which will directly impact all of us. The FCC has proposed eliminating the CW requirement for any amateur radio license in its July 19 Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order. The Notice was in response to 18 petitions for rule making which had attracted over 6200 comments from hams. However, the FCC refused to adopt any of the other changes to the amateur service suggested by the petitioners in its "tentative conclusions."

I have mixed feelings about the myriad of opinions and perspectives on these proposed changes. On the one hand, being an Extra class amateur radio operator



who got his temporary novice license with code only privileges 35 years ago, I can sympathize with the "old timers" who believe that knowledge of CW is a distinguishing attribute of the amateur radio service which serves several useful purposes. I have experienced the tremendous sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that came with passing the 20 wpm code test

even though I probably have not had a CW QSO since 1973. I will always be proud of that achievement.

On the other hand, time and progress march on. Ham radio must remain relevant to those who use it today and will use it in the future. When CW testing was dropped from the International Radio Regulations adopted at the World Radio communication Conference in 2003, the handwriting was on the wall. Most of the more progressive western countries dropped the requirement immediately, and I have experienced only pleasure in handing out contacts to their new licensees (especially from DX locations).

The ARRL's response to

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This Months Meeting

Hazardous Materials presentation by Alan Whitman, **K6ZY**. Alan will discuss where you might encounter hazardous materials, other industrial hazards and some general rules to help keep you safe.

September Meeting: Meeting location to be announced.

President's Corner

(Continued from page 1)

the FCC's Notice, unfortunately, can best be described as "grumpy" with CEO David Sumner using such terms as "disappointed" and not "the right road." However, the ARRL tries to ride the fence with one foot planted firmly in the past and the other in the future. The ARRL had wanted a new entry level license, consolidation of the license classes and retention of the 5 wpm requirement for Amateur Extra. But, wisely, I think, the FCC said that automatic upgrades are not in the public interest. Certainly, many hardworking amateurs proud of their achievements might also have a problem with "automatic" upgrades.

In addition, the ARRL is working on another petition to "re-farm" HF bands to establish sub-bands based upon the bandwidth of a signal rather than mode (e.g. - 500 Hz, 2.0 kHz and 3.5 kHz rather than CW, digital and phone). Once again, however, the ARRL in its proposal has had to mollify practitioners of the ancient arts who insist on using double-sideband AM with bandwidths of up to 9 kHz. In fairness, the ARRL has to listen to its membership, and it will be up to the FCC to make a final sensible decision on how best to use the airwaves. Keep an eye out for the new comment periods and put your oar in the water if you feel strongly about any of these issues. They will affect us all for a long time to come.

The only real certainty is that more ham radio operators are going to end up with access to the international HF spectrum, but probably no sooner than the sunspot cycle reaches its minimum. Therefore, I believe it's doubly important for these prospective upgraders to start studying now and take advantage of newer technologies, such as internet enhanced international radio like VoIP, to gain experience in world wide communications.

73 es CUL .-.-.
Jim de **K6JAT**

Hands On - Right On!

Wow! What a month!

With Field Day preparation, Field Day itself, Fire Patrol, net control duties on various nets and other operating activities there were ample opportunities for one to get one's hands dirty in all aspects of ham radio. And in that process learn new skills and techniques that can never be gleaned from the pages of a book or the flickering of a computer screen. There is no substitute for interacting with real people, turning real knobs and switches and connecting real cables and wires.

During the last month I just may have cured myself of a pretty bad case of "just-so-itis." My radio had been a careful and cautious creation and I was fearful of moving the tiniest item, afraid that "it" would go away. I had stared at a new rig, still in its box, for several months, hoping the manual enclosed would somehow leach into my brain and I could instantly comprehend and utilize the contents of that box. And, of course, that magical event never occurred. I actually had to open that box, read that manual and, with the help of able associates, get that rig up and running. Everything was finally "just so."

And so it stayed for weeks and then months. It worked didn't it? Most of the time anyway, and if it was not perfect you could always blame old propagation, the universal scapegoat. Better not tweak anything-you just might upset that great balance and be off the air forever!

And then the Great Upheaval—Field Day! Many times I had rehearsed in my mind the procedures I would follow to set up my humble FD shack. And when the time came to get my hands dirty the task was fairly simple. Of course the assistance of able associates certainly helped and was welcomed! Another learning opportunity! See! This stuff does work even if the setup was not "just so."

After Field Day my equipment sat ingloriously in a cardboard box, a jumble of wire and connectors, sad and silent. Certainly that pile of components could never be set up again in that familiar "just so" fashion. Oh well.

It was time to get my hands dirty again! Since that time I have set up and taken down my station 4 times. A different location or a different configuration. And you know what? Each time it was "just so!!"

I had stumbled across the cure for my malady! That metal and wire, with a little bit of electricity, can work from just about anywhere and just about any fashion. All it takes is getting your hands dirty and knowing that if it does not work this way, it will certainly work that way and it will probably work in any way you want it to! And you can go from there. The sky is the limit.

Perhaps now I am free of that curious ailment of "just-so-itis." And maybe now I will take a respite from on-line courses and "book-learning". The knowledge from past courses and tests is stored upstairs.

Now comes the fun part! Getting your hands dirty, and with the assistance of able associates, understanding that learning is doing but more importantly, doing is learning!

73 Dave **AE6PX**

Oakland Hills 2005 Fire Patrol

I am very happy to report that we achieved all of the goals laid out in the plan for the July 4th Fire Patrol. From 1600 – 2000 we deployed 3 two-person patrols covering three sectors. During that time, we had three Nets in operation. A Tactical Net with Net Control from Station 25, a Resource/Travel Net run from the EOC and a Command Net for communications between the two fixed locations. I am glad to say that this year we had nothing to report. And my most important goal of the day was reached; no one was hurt!

I would like to thank everyone who volunteered; Art **W6THD**, Bill **KF6VOG**, Bob **KE6IUE**, Charles **KD6OCW**, Chris **KE6MQW**, Dave **AE6PX**, Dave **KF6EPQ**, David **WB6NER**, George **W6BUR**, Herb **WA6CUY**, Karen **KG6ADB**, Margery **KF6GTT**, Michael-John **KF6YRG**, Mike **W6UAB**, Randy **KA6BQF**, Robin **KD6OAQ**, Selma **KG6SXJ** and Vail **KE6WPJ**.

An extra thank you to both Adele **KE6HKY** and Jim **KG6RZQ** for letting me change shifts on you at the last minute.

And a great big thank you to Marty **NP2LW** (Selma's brother) for coming all the way from the Virgin Islands to help us out on our Fire Patrol!

73 Michael **KG6DER**



Part of the first shift crew taking a moment to smile

Call For Ham Volunteers - Oct 9 Oakland Bikeathon

The Bikeathon fundraiser Bike Against the Odds, is once again looking for SAG drivers and Amateur Radio communications. This year's event will be on Sunday, October 9 from 6 AM to 3 PM, starting at Lake Merritt.

Please email me, Mike Pompa **KB6MP** at mikep@pdarrl.org for more information, or to volunteer. I will send volunteers a short questionnaire to help place you in an appropriate role.

Please announce this event at any nets you participate in. Please pass information about riding the bikeathon to any cyclists you know or any friends or relatives who would be interested in supporting breast cancer PREVENTION. Send them the link below.

Last year's experience shows that mobile rigs were a necessity on half of the routes, so I am hoping to attract hams who are willing to drive their mobile equipped vehicles with SAG (Supplies and Gear). This means you will drive with a bike mechanic or first aid/EMT, and may have to stash a bike or two on a bike rack, or deliver cases of water/food to a rest stop. Of course, with rest stops and the main event at Lake Merritt, there are plenty of opportunities for HT equipped volunteers to help with communications.

Routes cover from 12-65 miles, all on streets of Oakland, Orinda and Moraga.

The organizers are the Breast Cancer Fund, which focuses on breast cancer prevention and the Oakland Yellow Jackets bicycle group.

<http://www.oaklandyellowjackets.org/>
<http://breastcancerfund.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=104407>

ORCA Fire Patrol Presentation on July 6, 2005

3 members of ORCA attended the monthly meeting of the Alameda County Sheriff's Communications Team at the Alameda County OES in Dublin. The purpose of the visit was to present and share ORCA's time proven Fire Patrol plan and how it was implemented this year.

Fire Patrol 2005 was barely in the books when the invitation came in to David **WB6NER** by ACSCCT to make the presentation. **WB6NER** and Michael **KG6DER**, working under deadline, created an impressive PowerPoint presentation that was easily transferable to brochure form.

At the meeting these brochures were distributed to the 15 or so assembled ACSCCT members. **WB6NER**, **KG6DER** and Dave **AE6PX** took turns explaining the history, function and goals of ORCA's Fire Patrol plan. Discussion with ACSCCT followed.

This successful presentation was very well received by the ACSCCT members and they were encouraged to borrow from and follow ORCA's Fire Patrol blueprint for the Fire Patrols they will be performing.

Special thanks to David **WB6NER** and Michael **KG6DER** for creating the presentation on such short notice!

73 Dave **AE6PX**

I hope to see you there,
Mike Pompa **KB6MP**

SK Estate Sale

After speaking with George Hughes, San Francisco Amateur Radio Club "SFARC" president and Bob Vallio from Pacific Division, they suggested I contact as many San Francisco Bay Area clubs to spread the word about this one-time only estate sale on August 27th in the Sunset District (loads of good parking!!) of San Francisco from 7AM-3PM.

My recently deceased father, Hugh R. Peterson **W6PAE**, was a long time member of SFARC and former FAA electronic technician at SFO. My mother and I are hosting this sale of his Ham Radio and test equipment along with other unusual and interesting items he picked up over 40+ years of collecting. We are not trying to make a profit from this sale and prices will be very reasonable. We want these treasures to go to people who will be appreciative of them, as he was.

www.tallforeheads.com/Radio

All you need to know about the sale is posted at this website. I will be traveling up to SF in mid-August to begin organizing the sale, posting pictures of equipment to this site along with pertinent information concerning the items for sale. Several members of SFARC have offered their help with the pricing and evaluation of the collection, for which I am extremely grateful.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Anne Marie Peterson-Kolatkar

Upgrading Story Part I

Editor/Author Note: I wrote this last year right after getting my General license but I never had room in the NewsLetter for it until now. I have since gone on to take and pass the Extra Exam and additionally become a Volunteer Examiner. With the pending FCC decision, I felt I needed to present this now.

In May of 2002 I moved from Concord to an apartment in Oakland. A short while later I decided to study for my upgrade. Sadly, a few days later, my living situation became somewhat unstable. There was the possibility of my having to suddenly move out of the apartment. This was causing me great distraction. I decided to shelve upgrading until my living situation became stable again.

Two moves and 18 months later, in January of 2004, my living situation finally resolved itself. I moved into a studio in Concord. Now I could concentrate on more than just work and finding a new place to live.

After a month of hitting the books in earnest, in the middle of February 2004 I was able to pass the Element 3 Exam. You have to love those Gordon West study books! That meant I had 365 days to learn Morse code and pass the Element 1 exam. Passing Element 3 was the motivation I needed to really sit down and learn the code. The day after passing Element 3 I started in earnest.

After three weeks of studying (as I said in my earlier CodeQuick review, it is a GREAT program), I felt confident enough to take a swing at the test. The nearest test session I could find was Sunday morning in Placerville. Late Saturday afternoon I left for Placerville. Unknown to me, a short time before I had left, there had been an accident on the Benicia bridge (fortunately there were no injuries). The accident had caused a significant traffic backup. So I came to a stop many miles from the bridge and sat. 10 minutes later, just after passing the last exit before the bridge I realized something. I had forgotten the proof that I had passed the Element 3 test. Without that I could not prove that I had passed the test and upgrade my license.

As an aside: I am a bit superstitious about certain things. One of them is that if I tell people that I am going to go take a test that will throw things off. Either I will fail the test, or something will come up and I won't be able to get there. It's odd, but it's there.

Considering the time of day, the severe amount of traffic I was facing, and I had told a couple of people that I was going to take the test, I made up my mind. I decided to not go. Right then the traffic let up, so I figured I made the right choice.

The next test session I could get to was the following Friday. I decided to aim for that. I kept studying that week for 60 minutes each night, lest my skill slack off. However, I started to forget what I had learned. Even with the studying, it started to happen. I was missing the letter C. C was one of the earlier letters that I had found easy to remember. I was relieved when I did not miss it once the next night, but other letters started to cause me problems.

Friday finally arrived. My work schedule for the day was a light one. It happened that just past noon my boss told me I could

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Upgrading Story Part 2

(Continued from page 4)

take the rest of the day off. I was much relieved. I would have a chance to relax before the test and spend time reviewing the code in my head. I had just settled into working myself up for the test when my cell phone rang. My boss had forwarded me a message. It was a client who, anytime I go there on Friday, I end up having to work late. My boss indicated in the message that he expected me to go there that afternoon. I called the client and as luck would have it I was able to dispense with the issue over the phone.

As I start to get back into the reverie of Morse the phone rang again. It was another client. This one in was San Ramon, and they had a major problem. It was late enough in the day that just getting there through the traffic was going to take a long time. Not to mention the even greater traffic I would run into on my way to take the test. On top of that, with the issue they were having, it could take many hours to handle the problem. I found they were able to wait until Monday morning for me to tackle the project. However, a few minutes after ending the call, they called back. I was told that the owner of the company was about to try and fix the problem himself. They were really hoping I could go down there. The person I was speaking with knew that it would be a mistake if the owner tried to fix the problem. I told them I would see what I could do and called my boss.

He wanted me to go down there, but told me I could leave at 6 even if I was not finished. After more than 5 years of working for him, he still did not understand that I can't walk away from an unfinished job. If I go, I will feel obligated to stay until done. And I know it will take 4-6 hours to fix this problem. As it was 3:30 in the afternoon I would miss the test again if I went. Demanding an explanation of why I did not want to go (not accepting that I would be there until past 9 PM as a valid reason) I had to tell him my plans. I knew that just put the jinx on the whole thing and things would only get worse.

He quickly relented in his insistence that I go after I told him my plans. He really is a good boss when I give him a chance to be one. I was then able to mollify the client by getting a coworker to get there on Saturday. It was still up to me to put together a quote on a replacement for the failed equipment. Between this, and another client who kept calling to ask questions, the rest of the afternoon was killed. So much for my last minute study session.

Work was finally over and I left for the testing site. I walked in and was quickly informed that the person who usually puts everything together for the tests had left town. He had also failed to leave the tests with anyone else before he left. One of the examiners had gone home to get what testing supplies he could. It was mentioned that it was highly unlikely that he would have what was needed to give the Element 1 test, but I should wait just in case. We all milled around for a while chatting. About 20 minutes later the VE with the tests arrived. Sadly he informed us that he did not have what was needed to give the Element 1 test.

It looked like I was indeed jinxed by my revelation to my boss. As we were standing around chatting some more, I learned he did have the Element 1 tapes, he just did not have anything to play them on. A ray of hope! Hams are supposed to be resourceful in the face of adverse conditions, and I am happy to say we were. I immediately pointed out that I had a tape deck in my truck. One of the VEs says that he also had a tape deck in his car too and that we could indeed take the test in his!

A short time later we climbed into the car. Using a Thomas Brothers map book as my writing surface, in a busy parking lot, I started the test.

The tape starts and I realize I made a mistake while learning the code. I had been learning it at a slightly faster speed than needed. I had the thought it would be that much easier to write it at the slower speed with the added nervousness of actually taking the test. I was wrong and missed some letters and numbers. I knew that the characters I was missing were in the answers to the questions. Most were such that if you missed a single letter or number, you could not fill in the rest. I was feeling a bit tense as my test was graded. I learned that I was correct and had not answered enough correctly to pass. However, there are two ways to pass Element 1. The first is to answer 7 of 10 questions correctly. The other is to have one full minute of correct copy.

It was down to that minute in order for me to pass. I was called over by a VE and asked what a letter was in my sloppy handwriting. "K" I said. He added that to the underlined row of letters I had correctly copied. He stopped at my next error and counted them up. 27 errors. At 5 words a minute, that was over a minute of solid copy!

So after the traffic jams, memory loss, last minute work hassles, jinxes and even having to take my code test mobile, I passed!

As I write this, I am Michael, **KG6DER/AG**



Speaker: Alan Whitman, K6ZY

Monthly events

1st Saturdays ORCA Monthly Meeting - Oakland OES 9:00
1st Sundays Livermore Swap meet Robertson Park
2nd Fridays East Bay Amateur Radio Club
2nd Saturdays Electronics Flea Market in Sunnyvale
3rd Fridays Hayward Radio Club
3rd Fridays Mount Diablo Amateur Radio Club
4th Fridays Amateur Radio Club of Alameda

Amateur Radio Club of Alameda meets 7:00 PM at Building 522
West Midway on Alameda Point.

East Bay Amateur Radio Club meets at 7:30 PM at the
Salvation Army, 4600 Appian Way, El Sobrante.

Hayward Radio Club meets at 7:30 PM 1401 West Winton Ave.
in Hayward behind Hayward Fire Station 6, next to the
Hayward Air National Guard Base.

Mount Diablo Amateur Radio Club meets at 7:30 PM
at Our Savior Lutheran Church,
1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette.

*Note: The Swap meet has a new location at
Robertson Park, Livermore
For more info*

<http://www.livermoreark.org/swap/swap.html>



Weekly Nets

Thursdays Oakland ARES/RACES Net
7:30 PM 146.88 MHz minus PL 77
Thursdays Alameda Emergency Preparedness
7:00 PM 146.88 MHz minus PL 77
Thursdays NALCO ARES/RACES
7:15 PM 147.480 MHz simplex
Mondays Hayward RACES
7:30 PM 145.130 MHz minus PL 127.3

ORCA Officers and Board

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The ORCA NewsLetter is published monthly. Any articles can be used with attribution. Articles, news and photos submitted make for a more interesting newsletter; thank you!

Please submit materials for the next issue by August 25 to Michael **KG6DER** kg6der@arrl.net or fax to 707 215-6124. Thanks again!