

SUNSPOTS



REDWOOD EMPIRE DX ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 750834, Petaluma, CA 94975

A DX and Contest-minded Amateur Radio Club serving the California coast north of the Golden Gate Bridge

VOLUME 32

NUMBER 5

MAY 2011

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Visit our Web Site at <http://www.redxa.com/>

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at Gourmet Garden Restaurant, Petaluma. If you need directions, please call one of the club officers.

6 pm — Social Hour in the Lounge
7 pm — Dinner and Meeting
8 pm — Program

PROGRAM: Our Program for the evening will be a presentation on the KPH Project of the Maritime Radio Historical Society by Bill Ruck W6VSY, chief transmit engineer.

REDXA President's Report

In case you hadn't heard the sad news, fellow ham and Sonoma County resident Jim McLaughlin WA2EWE/T6AF lost his life in a gun-fight that left nine dead at the Kabul Airport in Afghanistan on April 27th. The tragedy was made more poignant for those of us in REDXA since Jim was a guest speaker at our club meeting just this past month. Jim was a retired Army officer who signed on as a civilian contractor training helicopter pilots in Afghanistan and was one of only a very few Americans licensed to operate amateur radio in that country. When not overseas, Jim made Santa Rosa his home and had a remote station there that he could operate via the internet. I found Jim to be an instantly likable fellow with a real passion for ham radio and I'll regret not getting a chance to know him better.

Life can be so fleeting. We should enjoy every day that we have and never take a single one for granted.

Visalia

On to happier subjects, the International DX Convention at Visalia the weekend of April 16th was a fabulous success with more than 20 REDXA members among the 640 who attended. Driving through the Holiday Inn



parking lot, there was no question a ham radio event was going on...virtually every vehicle sported some kind of ham antenna or a call-sign license plate, or both! There was a great array of speakers and programs, including one by Alan, K6SRZ who gave his ZK2A presentation that he previewed for us a few days earlier. Bob Heil gave one of his 'evangelical' presentations on how ham audio ought to sound. The Contest Academy kicked off the weekend with programs presented by some of ham radio contesting's top gurus. For the second year in a row, the weather was perfect.

The exhibitors are always a big draw and this year was no exception. SteppIR debuted their newest and most powerful antenna yet, the DB-42, proudly displayed atop a 60' mobile tower from US Towers. The antenna was connected to a Flex 5000 and an Alpha 9500 on a table a few feet away, right next to the pool. In chatting with SteppIR's owner, Mike K7IR, I found out that he has a sister-in-law who lives in Petaluma, so I'm hoping that sometime in the future we can invite Mike to be a guest speaker at a REDXA meeting. I hope he likes Asian buffet!

We got to see lots of eye-bulging displays in the exhibit hall from the big players like Elecraft, Flex, I-Com, Yaesu, SteppIR, Alpha, M-Squared, Force-12, US Tower and many more.

Saturday night featured the big banquet dinner MC'ed by the ever-buoyant Chip Margelli K7JA. The big surprise for me was when Chip made a point of announcing that it was my birthday, while somehow not mentioning that it was also Bill KH6GJV's birthday that night as well. It wasn't until two weeks later when I ran into Bill at the VOMARC hamfest that he 'fessed up to putting Chip up to the deed!

The biggest excitement came at the Sunday morning breakfast when for the second time in the past few years a REDXA member became the winner of the big grand prize! Rick K6ZWB had earlier in the morning joked to other folks at his table that he was sitting near the front of the room so he wouldn't have to walk so far to the podium to pick up that FTDX 5000 when they picked his ticket...and then, they picked his ticket! Rick told me that when he got home, he didn't open the box for a week because he was afraid that it might have all been just a wonderful dream. Rick knows now that it was the 'real deal'. Congratulations Rick!

VOMARC Hamfest

Many thanks to our friends at the Valley of the Moon Amateur Radio Club for the latest edition of their annual VOMARC Hamfest. An impressive number of REDXA members showed up to look at the various tables of parts, test equipment, antennas, boat-anchor radios and more. We saw everything from junk to

treasure, upholding the old notion that "one man's junk is another man's treasure". One vendor, amongst his tables of electronic parts and pieces, was hawking a case of ladies pantyhose and another had old polka LP's for sale. I don't know why, but I guess that variety is the spice of life, and it was certainly on display last Saturday.

The breakfast was exceptionally good this year and included scrambled eggs, sausage and a big stack of blueberry pancakes...a great deal for \$6.00! I'm looking forward to next year's event.

KPH

Among the little-known treasures of the North Bay area are the historic sites of commercial communications station KPH. Most of us have driven by the beautiful art-deco building with the long, tree lined driveway which was used as the receiving facility for the station on the road to the Point Reyes lighthouse. Only a few may have seen the transmitting counterpart located near the town of Bolinas. I have been fortunate enough to get a good look at the insides of both facilities during a four-hour, personalized "A" tour arranged by my wife in honor of my 60th birthday two years ago. At our May meeting, we'll get to see the carefully preserved insides and outsides of KPH in a slide presentation by Bill Ruck W6VSY, who serves as the Chief Maintenance Engineer of the station. I'm hoping that he'll show us the oldest of the two transmitter buildings, now off-limits to the public that once housed an original Marconi spark-gap transmitter, and later a massive Alexanderson alternator, a 200 kW electro-mechanical transmitter that operated in the 18 to 30 kHz range. This should be a great program, and I hope you'll join us, Wednesday, May 11th at the Gourmet Garden!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING APRIL 2011

by Wally, N6AD

NO MEETING WAS SCHEDULED

APRIL MEETING MINUTES

by Wally, N6AD

President Ron N6IE called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm, April 13, 2011 at the Gourmet Garden in Petaluma. In attendance were 21 members plus guests Jim T6AF aka WA2EWE and Field Day co-chair Matt K6OHD from the Marin Amateur Radio Society. Ron N6IE requested a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting and the Treasurer's Report as published in Sunspots. Both were moved for approval, seconded and adopted.

Visalia is a great convention that attracts hams from around the world. You can see the latest in ham gear in the exhibit hall or get your QSL cards checked for DXCC or WAZ. There are also numerous presentations and programs to attend. The always entertaining Bob Heil, K3EID does a presentation on his microphone technology. The contesting forum discussed topics regarding new technologies like I.P. backed radios, remote Wifi rigs and voice skimmers. Speaking of skimmers and additionally spotting networks there is a new “zero beat” phenomenon, which produces hundreds of stations on the exact same frequency, making pileups unmanageable. If you want a little better chance of getting through the pileup, shift your frequency a bit after you click on the spot.

The DXing forum touched on topics of Online QSL Request Service or OQRS, a sort of Pay per QSL service and rumors of a new country in Southern Sudan in July, 2011. There were also numerous presentations from DXpeditions, including our own Alan, K6SRZ making his presentation on ZK2A.

Mike, G7VJR had an excellent presentation on his “Club Log” program. Club Log is a web-based application that analyses log files from radio amateurs all over the world. Using the logs, Club Log offers you a wide range of reports for your own benefit, and identifies large scale trends from the sum of all activity in the database. I talked briefly with Mike at Visalia and submitted a request for a REDXA club membership. Time will tell if it gets accepted and created.

I drove my truck to Visalia along with W6FQS, K6SRZ and KU6F. I have an Icom 706, AH4 auto tuner and an 8’ stainless steel whip. I turned on the rig before as we were approaching the Richmond-San Rafael bridge. IZ8HXG was CQing from the toe of Italy on 15 SSB, he came back on my first call and gave me a 57 report. We watched in amazement as we drove over center span 100+ feet over salt water on the lower deck of the bridge. His signal peaked at 20 over 9 and also upgraded my report to a solid S9. It was impressive to see the effects of height and the salt water counterpoise. We also worked E74IW Bosnia-Herzegovina and RZ3FW on 15 CW while mobile and using the Mic up/down keys for a paddle.

Contesters have a few contests to look forward to this weekend with 7QP, Indiana, and New England all having their QSO party contests this weekend. CQ WW WPX CW wraps up the contest season over the Memorial day weekend.

Other DX news...

As of this writing the solar flux has dropped to just above 100 and the A index at 7. Forecast calls for the A index to continue to fall. There is still a lot of DX

being reported on the higher bands, so turn on the rigs and try to work them.

If anyone wants to go to the South Pacific for a DXpedition.

Bill, VK4FW reports the following:

The PACIFIC DXERS have decided to wait for the results of an operation from Conway Reef by Hrane, YT1AD in Sep/Oct, before moving forward with their plans.

PACIFIC DXERS are finalizing their plans to go to Nauru. More Ops are needed and anyone interested should contact Bill by email vk4fw@westnet.com.au for more information. The dates they are looking at November 13 to December 7. Ops must be able to spend a minimum of ten days. The airline only runs from Brisbane on Sundays, returning on Wednesdays.

If you've been wondering where the Ukrainian hams have gone, they've lost some HF frequencies lately - 10100-10150 kHz (all of the 30 meter band) and 14250-14350 kHz. They've also lost a fair amount of UHF and microwave spectrum. Thanks, Alex UYØLL and ARRL Contest Update.

All of my antennas are presently down, so I haven't been on the air to give you first hand reports of conditions.

It's time for me to start planning my new antennas as the warmer weather arrives in beautiful wine country. The beautiful weather also signals the arrival of my daughter's busy travelling softball schedule. It appears every weekend in June and July has tournaments scheduled from Oregon, Tennessee, Las Vegas and L.A..

Memorial services for Jim McLaughlin T6AF/WA2EWE will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 7th at Eggen & Lance Mortuary, 1540 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa.

Thanks go out to Carl N4AA, editor of QRZ DX for allowing me to reprint some of his material.

73 and good DXing,
Jim – K6JS

Calendar of Upcoming Events:

May 6-8	EMCOMMWEST 2011, Reno NV
May 7-8	7th Call Area QSO Party
May 11	* REDXA Monthly Meeting
May 21-22	EU PSK DX Contest
May 28-29	CQWW WPX CW
Jun 8	* REDXA Monthly Meeting
Jun 11-13	ARRL June VHF QSO Party
Jun 18-19	All Asian DX Contest
Jun 18-19	Stew Perry Topband Challenge
Jun 18	Kid's Day Contest
Jun 25-26	ARRL Field Day
Jul 1	RAC Canada Day Contest
Jul 9-10	IARU HF World Championship
Jul 13	* REDXA Monthly Meeting
Jul 16-17	North American QSO Party RTTY
Jul 16-17	CQ WW VHF Contest
Aug 6-7	NA QSO Party CW
Aug 10	* REDXA Monthly Meeting
Aug 13-14	WAE DX Contest CW
Aug 20-21	NA QSO Party SSB

See <http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/> for more Contest Schedules.

NEWS FROM THE ARRL

ARRL to Change Providers for Equipment Protection, Club Liability Insurance Plans

On May 1, 2011, the ARRL will begin a new partnership to provide its ARRL-sponsored Equipment Insurance and Club Liability Insurance plans. The League has signed an agreement with Hays Affinity Group to serve as the program administrator to provide equipment insurance to its members who choose to elect coverage. In addition, Hays will also provide club liability insurance to ARRL Affiliated Clubs for those clubs that wish to take advantage of that program. Hays will be replacing Marsh Affinity Group Services as the program's administrator and will be introducing new policies for both plans, underwritten by the Hanover Insurance Company.

Not only is equipment protection coverage through Hays Affinity Group slightly less expensive than with Marsh, it's easier to enroll in the plans. You can sign up online and even schedule your equipment online, too. With Hays Affinity Group, you can have all your radio equipment covered, even the computers, hard drives and printers in your shack. You can also elect to have coverage for your towers and antennas, up to \$15,000 replacement cost. All losses are settled on the replacement cost value you have stated for your equipment. In addition, any newly acquired equipment during the policy term, up to a value of \$2000, will be covered until your next policy renewal. All this - - and more -- with only a \$50 deductible.

Be assured, if you currently have equipment or club liability insurance provided through Marsh Affinity Group, your coverage will continue through the end of your current policy. But keep in mind that when your policy expires, your coverage will not automatically be switched over to Hays. You will need to enroll with Hays to continue coverage under an ARRL sponsored plan. If you wish to switch to either of the new insurance policies now, you will have to cancel your policy with Marsh and sign up with Hays, or wait until your policy with Marsh is due for renewal and then sign up with Hays for coverage. If you choose to cancel with Marsh before renewal, you will receive a pro-rated refund of any unused premium fees you have paid.

The ARRL has been providing opportunities for equipment insurance to its members for more than 25 years. By choosing to let Hays Affinity Group cover your equipment, you are helping to support the ARRL; a portion of each premium comes back to the League to help fund programs that enable you to enjoy your on-air privileges.

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MEETING: MAY 11, 2011

