

The Short Circuit

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The official publication of the Antelope Valley Amateur Radio Club

MARCH 2007

President's Corner

Eugene Humpherys KG6SLC

It is interesting being an amateur radio enthusiast. There are so many aspects of the hobby that there is virtually something for everyone. Some find that contesting is the main attraction. Some find DX'ing rewarding. Others are interested in hi frequency aspects such as microwave communications. Still others are interested in ATV, remote control of toys etc., or APRS, or ????, and the list goes on.

However, no matter what our particular interests in amateur radio are most of us take time from our busy schedule to provide communication for public service events. We take pride in knowing that we are providing a public service. Our only payment is that good feeling inside for having assisted others.

The Antelope Valley Amateur Radio Club has been directly involved with, and/or providing communications for, a number of events for many years now. I recall my first year as a volunteer for the Rim Rally. I was assigned as communications for a sweep crew. I had my radio, extra fuses, a copy of my radio manual, all of the rally information including the frequency lists organized in a three

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**UNITED
WE STAND**

Meeting Notice

Thursday, March 1, will be the next meeting of AVARC, in the Primrose Room of the Larry Chimbole Center in Palmdale. Talk-in is available on 146.73 MHz. if you need directions.

This month's meeting will feature **Chuck Constantine KR6C**, who will give a talk on his DXpedition to Red Rock Canyon. Be sure to join us for a very interesting and informative evening!



Chuck Constantine KR6C

From The Veep

Jon Clark N6NQ

I hope you all enjoyed the February presentation by David Greenhut. I would like to thank David N6HEL, his girlfriend Rhonda, and his friend Scott WA9TI, for making the trek out to the Antelope Valley and bringing his inspiring presentation to us.

I was surprised to learn that the initial Amateur response was slow. Mississippi and Louisiana hams were not able to respond. They had to rely on their neighbors from Alabama to come in and set things up. To then learn that the LA area ARES organization was in rebuilding mode was a little sobering.

The presentation has generated quite a bit of chatter around the club and on the repeater. The LA section of ARES is looking for lots of new members, and would like to see growth in the Antelope Valley. If you would like to do more with your hobby and potentially be of service to your neighbors, an ARES membership may be in your future.

ARES would also like to see our club become an ARES affiliated club. This subject is beginning to be discussed the club's board of directors. If you would like to participate in this discussion, you should speak to board members or attend board or general

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President's Corner...



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ring binder, a mag mount antenna, and I was set...or so I thought. Just before the rally was to begin the sweeps captain and I met at the fairgrounds to install the radio in his vehicle. He was driving a Land Rover and Land Rovers are made from aluminum...so much for the mag mount! Fortunately the radio installation in my car had an antenna with a universal trunk lip mount. I opened the rear hatch of the Land Rover to mount the trunk lip antenna there and discovered that there was no lip at all around the entire edge. It turns out that Land Rovers are manufactured using square channel around the hatch opening. I then discovered, to my dismay, that the same type of square channel was used for all of the doors. Hmmmm, this was not good and definitely not according to plan. A close inspection of the hood and luggage rack would not provide any mounting options either. So here I was the day of the race and no way to mount the radio antenna onto the vehicle. After scrutinizing the vehicle, and my options, with a fine tooth comb I found a small flat vertical tab on the otherwise round front brush guard just large enough to attach my lip mount. Fortunately this antenna did not require a ground at the antenna base. A radio check revealed that we had a strong signal on both transmit and receive and we were on our way with another "learning experience" under my belt.

This year our club has the opportunity of assisting with the Baker to Vegas run held the 21st and 22nd of April. Runners in this group are exclusively from law enforcement, judicial, or other safety related groups and organizations. Every other day of the year these good people provide us with services that allow us to enjoy our freedoms and way of life on a daily basis. They put their lives on the line every day for us and in some cases their heroic actions save our lives. This is great way to not only provide our talents and services as radio operators but also to show them of our appreciation for all that they do for us. In addition, each time that we volunteer our time and talents we are that much more prepared to assist others in times of disaster or other times of need.

Personally I have not been involved with this particular event before and am looking forward to participating. I encourage you, as well, to volunteer for this worthwhile event. You will associate with a great group of people and have a wonderful time. And who knows, there may be another learning experiences out there for me, or maybe you, thrown in for good measure as well. To volunteer simply email either ehumpherys@baylessengineering.com, or the Comm. Captain David Greenhut at n6hel@arrl.net or call Eugene at (661)810-2594(cell) or (661)265-0466(home).

Eugene K6BLLC



From the VEEP...

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meetings. We need to determine what sort of opportunity this brings to the club.

For our March meeting, Chuck Constantine KR6C will give us a presentation on his DXpedition to Red Rock Canyon. Chuck is an avid DXer. He is a former Vice President and President of the Southern California DX Club.

Chuck worked a 160 meter contest from this location and has a presentation about. It will be interesting to see what sort of portable 160 meter antenna system Chuck deployed there and how it worked for him.

He will also describe his DX cluster packet operation in Quartz Hill. Whether you are an experienced DXer or interested in learning more about DXing, this should be an interesting talk.

73,

Jon N6NQ

Hamcon Registration Available

Start making your plans to attend the annual convention, to be held in Torrance on September 7-9, 2007. AVARC will be handling VE exams, and all local VEs are invited to take part.

73,

For early bird registration forms, please see Adrienne WA6YEO.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

General Membership Meeting

February 5, 2007

Opening: Eugene Humpherys – KG6SLC- Flag Salute 7:32 p.m.

Roll call was followed by a vote to accept the minutes as read by Secretary, Margie Hoffman-KG6TBR.

Treasurer's report was read by Don Jackson – WA6kPP and approved.

Items of Business:

President – Eugene Humpherys announced the year 2007 budget would remain the same as the budget in 2006.

Eugene went to a SATERN (Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network) meeting and obtained a book "It's a Disaster" for emergency preparedness and would propose to sell it at the club meetings and otherwise for a fund raiser. The book could be sold at Field Day and for other's interested. A logo can be added on the reverse cover with our club logo and meeting information.

Request for anyone interested in becoming the 2007 Field Day Chairperson – we still need a chairperson. Do we have anyone interested in volunteering for the position????? Please speak to any of the Board members.

Announcements:

Adrienne Sherwood – WA6YEO:

Next test session will be on February 5, 2007.

Also, anyone interested in becoming a VE, please see Adrienne for info and forms.

Ham Convention information discussion: Request for volunteers to assist in our club participation of HamCon. Location: Torrance Marriott Hotel - Sept 8-9, 2007.

Keith Hoyt – KG6GXO Asked for a show of hands for ARRL members.

Announced procedure when a silent key is known.

Break:

Eugene Humpherys – KG6SLC: Raffle – sale of tickets for the evening 50/50.

Announcement from CERT- Charlie Lesiecki KD6ICW.

Speaker for evening presentation:

David Greenhut N6HEL Spoke on Katrina Emergency assistance as seen from Ham Radio volunteer

Raffle: 50/50 was won by Jon Clark N6NQ

Other prizes for a year subscription to World Radio were won by Tully WB6CYP and Margie Hoffman KG6TBR

Meeting adjourned: 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by:
Margie Hoffman KG6TBR
AVARC Secretary, 2007

THE MORSE CODE EXAMINATION: End of an Era

Dan Sherwood, WA6PZK

My first experiences with Morse testing as an aspiring General Class amateur were with the FCC field office down in Long Beach, CA. The year was 1976. The ritual: First take the first Wednesday off work after feeling confident to sit for 13-WPM code. Then head down there, plenty early to beat the traffic and take a seat on the floor of the hallway outside the not-yet-opened door to the lobby of the FCC office, along with the throng of other would-be General Class applicants. Code testing was done first. Applicants were seated at rows of school desks equipped with inexpensive-looking plastic full-coverage earmuffs jacked into sockets along the wall. Copy paper was issued, and a short practice string was sent, then the actual CW test. 65 characters in a row were considered a pass. There was no questionnaire – after the last SK was sent, the examiner said “pencils down” and quickly snapped up the answer sheets. These were passed on to a small elderly lady, (perhaps 85), sitting outside the glassed-in exam area who passed judgment on the copy. She was no doubt the Goddess of Dead Air, the Champion of Open Frequencies, as her sole mission and purpose in life was keeping would-be hams from occupying them. She called my name: “YOU FAILED”. Oh well – A couple more Wednesdays over a couple more months, and she finally capitulated and included me in the list of folks who passed and got to take

the sending test. Believe it or not, I almost failed the sending test, as the “flea-market special” keyer I brought along didn’t want to cooperate. Fortunately, the sending guy was considerably more sympathetic and let me use the FCC’s J-38 straight key with the best action I have ever seen. No problem.

The next year, I went down and sat the 20-WPM test. They might as well have called that one the “codeless Extra”, as it was a walk in the park. By then they dumped the sending test, and rolled out a multiple-choice 10-question exam! A few minutes of playing Scrabble with my crummy copy and that exam

yielded a perfect score. They went to fill in the blanks a few weeks later. Fast-forward about eight years. The year was 1984 and the FCC had been out of the examination business. The ARRL was a bit slow in ramping up the volunteer exam, (VE), business here in California. A few folks out of the San Fernando Club decided to do something about it. Bill Bell, Gene Leary, Mike Stuber, Steve Schaffit, and R.C. “Smitty” Smith, plus Adrienne, and eventually myself got the Greater Los Angeles Amateur Radio Group, (GLAARG), VEC up and running. We decided to host our first VE exam in Santa

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Last Morse exam in the Antelope Valley, February 5, 2007
Seated: Jim Kernan Jr. KCØWHI, Dan Sherwood WA6PZK.
Standing: Volunteer Examiners Keith Hoyt K6GXO, and Al Almeida, N6JZ.

End of an Era...



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Clarita, at the combined SFVARC/SCARC field day. That was an INTERESTING session! It was huge with people even flying in for the first testing occasion in several years. We were just learning about this whole new VE thing. The first code test I administered was about 20 feet from the CW station. As I recall, headphones were in short supply. Folks that passed that one were truly qualified for the “real-world” CW copying experience – QRM and all!

Prior to setting up shop here in the Antelope Valley, Adrienne and I participated in SFVARC VE sessions held at the San Fernando Valley Red Cross. I remember building up my first junction box out of 100% recycled parts. It had eight ports, and no two volume controls were the same, however it worked perfectly. We pretty much maxed it out in those days – lots of folks taking exams. Adrienne did a lot of special tests in those days, such as the Handi-Hams. She also tested Cardinal Roger Mahoney, before he became Archbishop of Los Angeles. His copy was 100% perfect, with T’s crossed, and I’s dotted at 20 WPM. In one of our early Antelope Valley sessions, she recalls testing Doc Lask, K6CUF – SK. Doc blankly sat and listened to the 20WPM and wrote down nothing. He then went on to answer all ten questions correctly from memory. Really played with Adrienne’s head on that one.

In the late 1980’s, we started a regular schedule of VE testing out of our home in Lancaster. We would pack two, or sometimes three sittings in our small home when we conducted Saturday examinations. Into the 1990’s we moved the examination sessions to Adrienne’s place of business, the Lancaster Kumon Center. During this time, we saw some folks struggle, and others succeed. We saw the same mistakes being made, and we tried to give pointers to those who didn’t so they would have a better shot the next month around. We tested deaf applicants, with one individual copying the bar graph display on our audio amplifier by sight. We tested blind folks, with people bringing Braille typewriters over to the house to copy the exam. We had some comical moments over the years too, things like chairs breaking in the middle of an examination, (mine), and headphones so loud as to cause Matt K6MES to put a dent in the ceiling while trying to rip the headphones off quick enough.

In 2000, restructuring came around, and the 20 WPM and 13 WPM tests were replaced by 5 WPM for all classes of license requiring Morse. For some reason, the pass rate actually dropped when this occurred. I could almost surmise this was due to lower motivation, or over-reliance on computer generated tests from various web sites allowing students to memorize the practice QSOs. The mistakes that were made were the same as in years before. As before, we tried to point

those shortcomings out.

After 23 years of running out CW tests to nervous, perspiring applicants, the FCC has decided that time has run out for CW testing. We ran our last code test on February 5, 2007, to Jim Kernan Jr., KCØWHI, who passed the exam. In grading the copy, Keith and I took our usual bit of time to settle on how long the string of characters that was copied. We’d done this so many times before. It felt strange we would never do this again.

CW Testing: ..._._

Short Circuit to be e-mailed to AVARC club members

Starting this month, the AVARC Short Circuit will be emailed to all current AVARC members that we have a correct email address for. For the 2006 members this will be your last month for email or USPS service. If you did not receive an email version, it might be because we have your wrong email address or we just do not have an email address for you. Please send your email address to avarshortcircuit@thetanafoundation.org with your name and call sign and we will make sure we have your correct email address in the club database.



Antelope Valley Amateur Radio Club 2006 Officers

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