

# THE NUGGET



Mother Lode DX/Contest Club

## The Newsletter of the Mother Lode DX/Contest Club

October 2020

Volume 25 Number 10

### **From the President – NC6R**

Well, CQP has come and gone for another year. How'd you do? Many MLDXCC members were heard and worked; thank you for the all the Q's.

You never know where you're going to run into a former MLDXCC member. I logged Bob, W4JFA during Cal QSO, only to find out he was a former club member - small world indeed.

All the CQP Sequoia stations seem to be VERY popular. Sue and I ran N6I as a multi-single. 20 was the money band, 40 next with 80 doing surprisingly well in the later evening. At the end of the contest our log had 1,261 Q's (1,181 SSB & 80 CW). I know, Steve working CW? Shock! Well hey, it WAS search and pounce.

Current published reports claim this solar cycle is on the upswing which is very good news. HF band conditions do seem to be improving with openings to Europe and Japan on 17 & 15 meters of late.

Also there was noticeable support and participation by MLDXCC members for the Makrothen RTTY contest which was held

recently. Both Saturday and Sunday produced many good runs into Northern Europe on 20 meters.

Sweepstakes is just around the corner and the board has decided that MLDXCC will go for another Sweepstakes victory, looking to add to our winning streak.

Zoom meetings continue to produce quality speakers and a good number of attendees. Thanks go to our VP, Bob W1RH for his efforts in obtaining presenters.

Currently I'm attempting to secure an "in person" meeting location in either Jackson or Lockeford for the November meeting. It's important very that we're all together, as this is the meeting where club officers for the upcoming year are elected.

As always, here are websites to view upcoming contest and DX announcements -

Contest calendar dates are listed at - <https://www.contestcalendar.com/index.html>

DX operation announcements can be found at - <https://www.ng3k.com/misc/adxo.html>

73 & good DX,

## **From the V.P. - W1RH**

Well, CQP 2020 has come and gone and our members, as usual, came out in force. We had some huge scores, topped by WC6H's 345,240. I just don't know how Rich does it! Right behind Rich, however, were AE6Y (326,888), N6TV (305,424), K6MR (285,615, W1SRD (262,856), and N6JV (244,412). I should note that all except N6JV were given the honor of using the special SEQUOIA 1x1 calls assigned to them by the CQP organizers. I also want to note a nice multi-county mobile effort by Emilia, KI6YYT (with WB6BET at the wheel I believe). I am only going by what I see on 3830 as I write this.

This year, we elected to go with the Medium Club category, which is the category that the Southern California Contest Club has gone with over the past few years. In this category, only the top 35 logs are counted. I only see 31 logs listed on the 3830 site for MLDXCC, but I'm sure there will be several more logs on behalf of MLDXC when we see the final results. At this point, I see 35 logs on 3830 for SCCC. Our scores have been very, very close over the past few years but MLDXCC has always opted for the Unlimited Club category. For that reason, we're assuming SCCC will again be in the Medium Club category, giving us some competition. It's no fun to win a plaque when you're the only club in the category.

The numbers so far, however, are not even close, with the Southern California Contest Club showing a claimed score total of 4.5 million. Our claimed score total is 1 million points lower.

Steve / NC6R

Again, we won't know exactly who's logs were posted to MLDXCC until the final results come out. At that time, I'll do a full report.

Our next big contest is Sweepstakes and we're going for our 6<sup>th</sup> first place win in a row. The competition is always tight and, unlike CQP, there are always several clubs in the running including SCCC, Mad River, The Florida Contest Group, DFW Contest Group, the Arizona Outlaws and Contest Club Ontario.

Covid19 has clearly increased the amount of participation in all contests this year. CQP, for the first year ever, has already received over 1,000 logs. This could also explain the huge claimed scores posted for the Southern California Contest Club. With the Covid19 limitations, it appears that many SCCC contesters stayed inside with their radios rather than venture outside into the beautiful Southern California weather. This will probably be the case for Sweepstakes also, and this applies to all of the clubs in the running. We're going to be seriously challenged this year, so the time to prepare is now. If you want to start with something, take a look at the October NCCC recorded Zoom meeting, which featured a great SS "how to maximize your score" talk from Bob, N6TV.

Bob W1RH

## **Next Meeting**

**Date:** November 13th

**Time:** 11:30 AM

**Location:** Los Hermanos in Martell

**Presentation:** Election meeting

## **MLDXCC Treasurer - K6SZQ**

MLDXCC Treasurer's Report -September 2020

8/31/2020 Opening Balance		\$2,296.36
Income		\$40.00
2020 Dues - Paypal	\$20.00	
2021 Dues - Paypal	\$20.00	
Expenses		\$0.00
9/30/2020 Ending Balance		\$2,336.36

## **From the Secretary - KI6YYT**

### **MLDXCC October 19, 2020 Meeting Notes**

The October meeting, on Zoom and was called to order by Bob Hess, W1RH. There were approximately 23 members and guests attending online. The secretary thanks all of you who signed into the meeting using your name and call sign.

The minutes and treasurer's report were in the last newsletter. A vote was taken to approve them as published in the last newsletter and it

was passed. Dues are due, so check the newsletter or the website on how to pay them.

Nominations for officers for 2021 were opened. The current board is willing to serve another term but anyone wanting to serve should enter their name for consideration in next month's election. The election will be at the November meeting, which will be on Zoom. No in person meetings are planned at this time.

There are no new member applications.

CQP scores will be close due to Covid and forest fires affecting operations.

Sweepstakes is coming up. MLDXCC will be participating this year. We have won in the past.

Our program for the afternoon was given by Doug Grant, K1DG. His topic was Log Checking Reports. I thought that the definition of PEBCAK was an interesting factoid: Processing Error Between Chair And Keyboard. It applies to many facets of life.

The next MLDXCC meeting is Nov. 14. The program topic is TBD.

By Secretary, Emilia Seiferling, KI6YYT

## **CLUB Dues**

### **2020 dues are due!**

The Dues period runs from Jan 1 to Dec 31. Dues are \$20.00 individual, \$30.00 family

PayPal – Send to: [MotherLodeClub@gmail.com](mailto:MotherLodeClub@gmail.com). Use the Friends and Family option.

Cash or Check - Given to a club officer at a meeting. Or mail to the Treasurer - Sue Allred K6SZQ, 17610 Red Mule Rd. Fiddletown, CA 95629

## Club Log Standings

### Overall

1	N6JV	Norm Wilson	189
2	K6YK	John Lee	173
3	WU6W	Rick Palio	160

### CW

1	K6YK	John Lee	163
2	N6JV	Norm Wilson	141
3	WC6H	Rich Cutler	112

### Phone

1	NC6R	Steve Allred	118
2	K6YK	John Lee	98
3	WC6H	Rich Cutler	92

### Data

1	K7QDX	Michael Steiner	151
2	N6JV	Norm Wilson	143
3	K6OK	Jim Varney	137

*Club Log Standings are based on worked entities during the calendar year.*

## In the news

The sunspot cycle is more varied than previously thought. Sunspots cycle every 11 years, but also every 88, 200 and 2400 years.

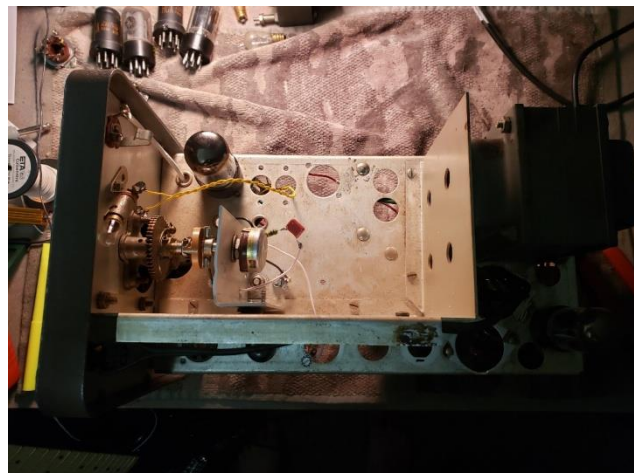
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-sunspot-cycle-is-more-intricate-than-previously-thought/>

## Member Reports

### Doug's Audio Amplifier Project

My friend gave me half a dozen HP200CD oscillators in various states of disrepair. I thought that this would be a perfect candidate to convert into an audio amplifier or a guitar amplifier. I decided to convert this one into a guitar amplifier. I used a schematic I found on the net, which is similar to a Tweed Champ 5F1. It uses a single 6V6 and a single 12AX7. I kept and modified most of the original power supply. I kept the 5Y3, because I needed the extra voltage drop. The transformer in there is really beefy and was putting out over 440 volts when using diode rectification. I was able to tame it down to about 315 volts on the plate of the 6V6 and 200 volts on the plates of the 12AX7. In my junk box I found a really cool audio output transformer with taps for 4, 8, 16, and 500 ohms. I was able to remove the large multi section air variable capacitor and use the same knob and shaft for the volume pot after fabricating an L bracket out of aluminum. All of the original parts have been added to my junk box and will be reused eventually in some other project.

It works very well and has excellent tone when used with an 8 inch Celestion guitar speaker.





Doug WE6Z

## Norm's 2 Meter EME Antenna

This summer I have been assembling equipment and parts to try 2-meter moonbounce. I have had good success with EME on 6 meters, so I had an idea what I needed. You never have too much antenna, so that was one of the first projects to consider. A 2-meter yagi with good gain costs about \$350. My 6-meter antenna is a homemade Loop Fed Array or LFA invented by G0KSC. He provides free dimensions for all the antennas he has produced. A set of data for a 14 element LFA was found on the internet and transferred to an Excel datasheet. I went to my aluminum bone yard and recycled all the 3/8-inch

tubing that was there. After a cleanup, I cut the elements as accurately as I could. The loop driven element was 1/2 inch and the directors and the reflector were 3/8 inch. The boom must be almost 30 feet long, so I bought a length of 2-inch aluminum irrigation pipe. Small pieces of "Z" extrusion were used to get the elements above the boom and provide a surface to mount the plastic tubing clamp assemblies. These are available on eBay and are not expensive. After marking the element positions on the boom, the element assemblies were clamped on and their positions were double checked. With the help of my wife, the antenna was pushed onto the roof of the porch beside the radio room. When attached to my old military tripod assembly, it was checked with my antenna analyzer. At 144.1, the SWR was 1:1 so the match was perfect. The gain is supposed to be 16.54 dBi which should be adequate for my needs. The antenna's SWR is flat from 144 to 145.



The positioner was attached and some fine tuning on clamp placement was done. For the experimental phase, the azimuth will be manual and the elevation will use the positioner and a remotely reading digital display. During the ARRL EME Contest, I copied several European stations on EME so the K3 with its transverter and the LFA were very successful.



N6JV

---

## **ARRL Contesting Certificates**

If you have participated in ARRL Contests by submitting your log, enter your call sign and see your available certificates. You can view and

download them. The certificates show where you placed in the contest.

<http://contests.arrl.org/certificates.php>

---

## **Awards Checkers ARRL**

Ken Anderson, K6TA

(DXCC, WAS, VUCC, 160M)

Rick Samoian, W6SR

## **Tube of the Month**

### **X-375**

Starting in 1942, EIMAC started assigning “X” numbers to experimental tubes. One of the most common of the “X” tubes is the X-375. You will find it in many tube collections which is surprising when you consider that there was no known use for it. The tube is a double tetrode allegedly made from parts from 3C24 tubes. It is also unusual in that it uses a giant 7-pin socket like an 813. The X-375 was made of thick hard glass and should have been able to take very high voltage. From some EIMAC notes, we find the project was started in April 1944 at Salt Lake City, with the X-159 and continued for over a year ending with the X-375. Why at the peak of WWII, would EIMAC expend such an effort and then abandon it?

If this tube was probably made to replace an existing tube and that tube must have been about the same size and shape. The SLC plant was very busy making vast numbers of VHF triodes for use in RF and pulse service at this time. The newer RADARs used

magnetrons, so pulse modulators would still remain in demand. Several of the early RADAR units used the RCA 3E29 dual tetrode as a pulse modulator. The 3E29 is a pulse rated version of the 829B which was a popular pre-war VHF tube. In pulse service, it could handle 5000 volts. Much of the tube development was pushed by the military to have more rugged and dependable tubes. Many early RADAR sets were still in service and they may have wanted to modify them with stronger tubes. The pulse duty cycle is very hard on tubes.

### **It’s just a theory**

Why would you use a giant 7-pin socket? The giant 7-pin socket has the same mounting pattern as the 7-pin septar socket that the 3E29 uses. When you want an easy modification to a piece of gear, you don’t want to cut up the chassis to mount it. The X-375 like the 3E29 has a pair of tubes with 6.3-volt filaments. EIMAC didn’t make many tubes with 6.3-volt filaments. The exchange would only require a screwdriver and a soldering iron. EIMAC was in full

production until August 1945 when it stopped abruptly when something happened that they never planned on. The Army dropped a bomb, the war was over and soon all the gear that needed tubes was available in surplus for small change. Many of the "X" tubes after this date were reserved for post war tetrodes like the 4-250A and other tubes for commercial as well as military use.



Visit the museum at [N6JV.com](http://N6JV.com)  
Norm N6JV

### **MLDXCC Focus Contests**

The following lists all contests in which MLDXCC would appreciate your efforts.

ARRL SS CW/PH  
ARRL DX Phone\*  
ARRL DX CW\*  
ARRL 10M\*  
ARRL 160M\*  
California QSO Party

\*Proposed and approved at the November 12, 2016 MLDXCC general meeting.

Northern California Contest Club (NCCC) announced their focus contests at their August 2018 meeting. This list can be found in the Aug 2018 NCCC newsletter.

ARRL RTTY RU  
CQ WPX RTTY  
CQ WPX SSB  
CQ WPX CW

### **MLDXCC – Outgoing ARRL Bureau**

The Mother Lode DX/Contest Club will provide Outgoing QSL Bureau services to current paid club members. The policy is as follows:

The club will cover packaging, shipping, and the \$7.00 ARRL fee. Members will be responsible for the \$1.15 per ounce fee, payable to the club. A scale will be provided at the designated meetings to weigh the cards.



Twice per year, at the March and October meetings, members may bring their outgoing cards (or have delivered by another club member) to the meeting for collection and collating.

All regulations set forth by the ARRL must be met, including:

Members must be ARRL members to use outgoing bureau.

Must provide proof of membership (QST mailing label, ARRL membership card)

Cards need to be sorted according to ARRL requirements when brought to club.

The after-meeting program at those meetings would be dedicated to weighing, merging the cards, and making sure the paperwork is in order.

For more information regarding the ARRL Outgoing Bureau, please visit

<http://www.arrl.org/outgoing-qsl-service>

### **QSL bureau rates have changed.**

Outgoing QSL Service

QSL Service Fee Structure (effective May 15, 2019)

ARRL members — including foreign members, QSL Managers, or managers for DXpeditions — should enclose payment as follows:

Effective May 15, 2019, the rate structure is:

\$2 for 10 or fewer cards in one envelope.

\$3 for 11-20 cards in one envelope, or 75 cents per ounce, for packages with 21 or more cards.

[For example, a package containing 1.5 pounds of cards -- 24 ounces, or about 225 cards -- will cost \$18.]

Under the new fee structure, there are no transaction service fees.

You should use an accurate scale to weigh your cards. Most post offices have scales that you may use.

Please pay by check (or money order) and write your call sign on the check. Send cash at your own risk. DO NOT send postage stamps or IRCs. Please make checks payable to: "The ARRL Outgoing QSL Service."

Packages received with insufficient payment will not be processed until the balance is paid in full. The outgoing QSL bureau does not keep money on account.

### **The NOAA Solar Update**

Click the link below to display the latest NOAA solar predictions.

<http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/products/weekly-highlights-and-27-day-forecast>

### **UPCOMING Events**

For the latest contest info, click on the following link:

<http://www.contestcalendar.com/contestcal.html>

## California QSO Party 2020

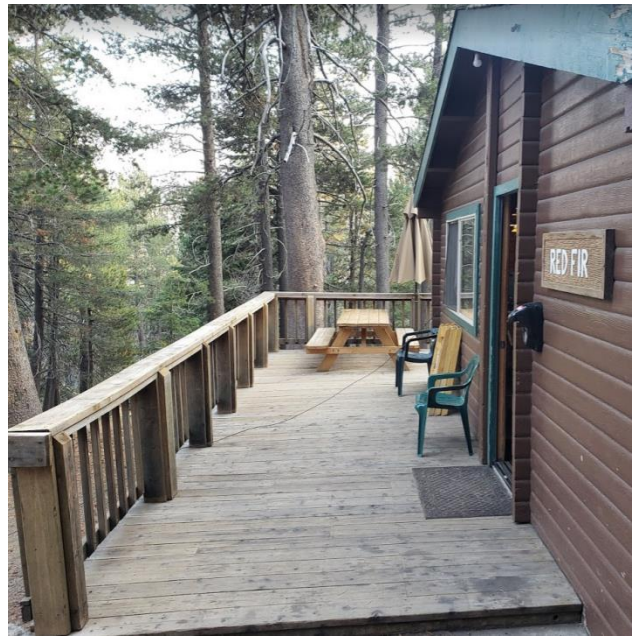
### CQP 2020 from Alpine County - W6BRY, WE6Z

Boy was that a lot of fun!

We had a great time, and with only 1 week to prepare, we did better than I had hoped.

I had originally planned a single op expedition to Alpine County. I was going to operate from near Caples Lake up off of Highway 88. I was going to camp overnight in my truck and do my best. However due to the fires and the high fire danger, El Dorado National Forest had an Emergency Camping Prohibition. That meant that I couldn't stay overnight. Therefore if I did go, then it would only be a one day operation, and I would have to take things down before sunset. So I decided to just operate from my home QTH.

But then circumstances changed, and several people were not able to go to Alpine county. At one point, Alpine county only had one planned operation. A week before CQP, Dean N6DE contacted Brian W6BRY and I and arranged an opportunity for us to stay at the Red Fir cabin at Lake Alpine Lodge.



So with one week's notice I started packing.

As for antennas, I had recently purchased a 40ft Spiderbeam fiberglass pole. My initial thoughts were to build a vertical with it. I reached out to the NCCC braintrust, and the overwhelming answer was to use that as a support for a fan dipole. Not having time to order any materials, I looked through my antenna junk pile. I found that I had a roll of WD-1A/TT military commo wire, some insulators, a roll of 450 ohm ladder line, and some plastic gutter ferrules. The plans for fan dipoles and the spaces between the wires are practically infinite, so I decided to space the wires exactly 4 inches apart, because that's what I had. I chose the ladder line in the hopes of having the least amount of loss. I even decided to not use a balun, and instead used a true balanced line tuner. I've had the Johnson Matchbox on my shelf for a number of years and figured that this would be a great opportunity to put it to use.



After assembling the antenna, I fabricated a tilt mount for the trailer hitch to attach the Spiderbeam pole to.



Built out of 1/2" steel and schedule 80 steel conduit, it is plenty strong. The Spiderbeam pole slides over the pipe and one bolt is removed to hinge it from horizontal to vertical.



This year's Field Day I forgot several items including some interface cables. So this time I made sure to set up everything and do a test run at home first.



I also fabricated a stand for a vertical using an old 24.5" big rig rim and metal pipe.



I got everything loaded up and ready to go.



We got there a little early, checked in, and started setting up antennas.





As with every trip, I did forget something. I forgot to bring my fishing pole, which I use to launch a fishing line over the branch of the trees in order to haul up a rope.

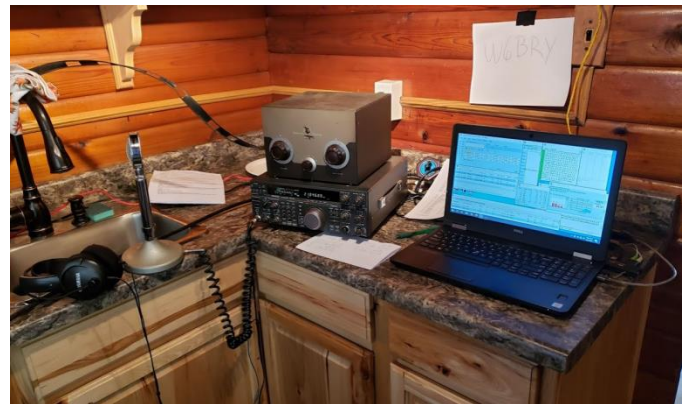
I went down to the lodge store, and they had one for sale, but I decided not to spend the \$49.97 + tax. I bought a spool of fishing line instead. I did have a fiberglass 20 foot crappie pole that I had used as an antenna support in the past, so I rigged that up with the fishing line, and launched a ¾" nut up in the air. To my surprise the crappie pole launched the nut all the way over the top of a 70

foot pine tree on the second try. We then hauled up some Dacron rope to support the center of an end fed wire.

The antennas were a Cushcraft R5, Cushcraft R7, 20/40//80 fan dipole at 36 feet, and an end fed wire with an apex at 45 feet.

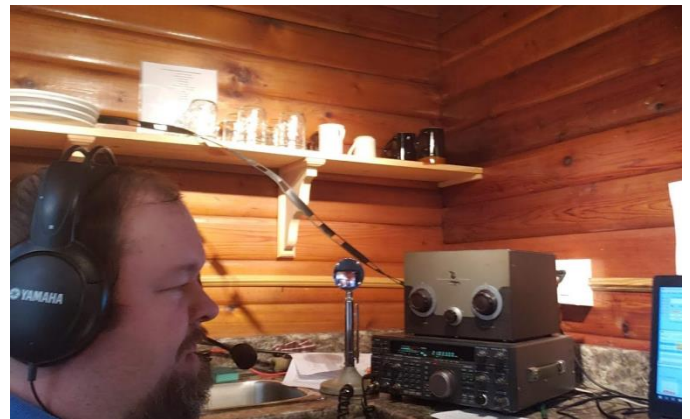
Thankfully we were able to get all of the antennas assembled and put up Friday night before sunset.

I set up my station in the kitchen. My station consisted of a Kenwood TS-850, Johnson matchbox, and Dell laptop.



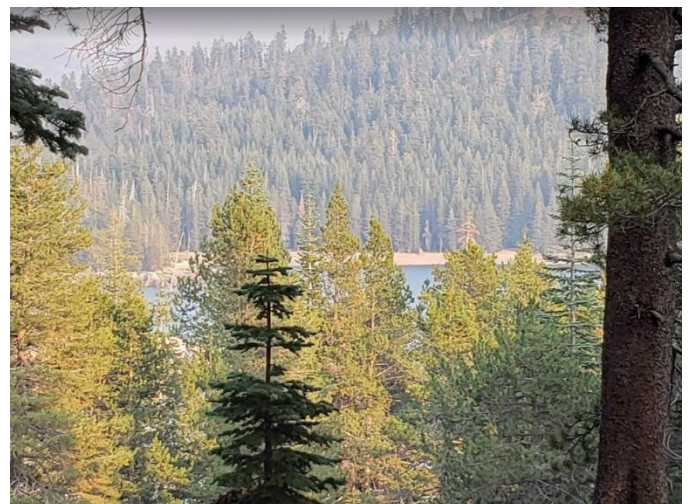
Brian set up his station in the front room.

Brian's station was an Icom IC-7300, Ameritron roller inductor tuner, and Asus laptop with a second screen.



Because of some amount of inter-station interference, we decided to not run the SB-200 amplifier.

Next time we will bring bandpass filters and/or coax stubs.



The band conditions were a little rough on Saturday morning, but continued to get better by the evening. This location had a very low noise level.

The end-fed wire worked much better than expected on 40 and 80 meters. The fan dipole performed great as well. The verticals had a higher noise level and only worked better in a few circumstances on 20 and 15 meters.

I was surprised that 15 meters was as open as it was.

Sunday was pretty slow but we slogged through it.

We ended up with right at 698 Qs and 53 mults. We only missed ND and some of the Canadian mults.

It sure was nice to have a comfy bed, snacks, and facilities within reach.

We got everything disassembled, packed up, and cleaned before sunset and headed home.

Thanks again to Dean N6DE, Byron N6NUL, the CQP organizers, Brian W6BRY, and the NCCC braintrust for all the help in making this expedition happen. 73s.

Doug WE6Z

---

### N6S

Was great having N6S as the call for CQP 2020. I had all the multipliers in a little less than 6 1/2 hours into the contest.

Thanks again to NCCC for allowing me to have the special call



JIM N6JS/N6S

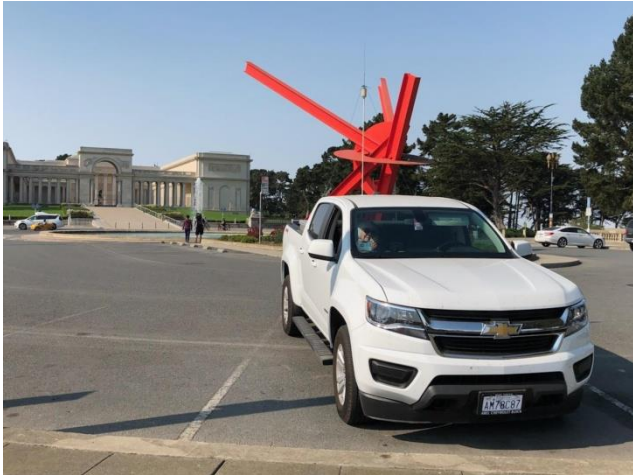
---

### KI6YYT

### CQP

The first photo is at our starting point at the Legion of Honor in SF.





This year we tried something different for CQP. For that last couple of years we have been doing the VHF contests as a Rover, so we thought we would try CQP mobile. I wanted to be in the YL category, so I'd had to operate solo. I couldn't be in the YL category as a multioperator entry and Jim was good with that. He was my route planner, driver, navigator, and hardware guy. I did not operate while in motion. It is just too difficult to log in a bouncing 4WD truck. All operating was done when parked.

We looked at the counties map and planned a route. We started in San Francisco County, at the Legion of Honor parking lot, at 9am and then moved to Marin, Sonoma, Napa, & Solano on Saturday. We stayed in each county about 2 hours. I had packed cold beverages and snacks, but we took a fast food lunch break in Marin County. We rewarded ourselves with a nice inside sit down dinner on Saturday at La Strada near the Napa airport. On Sunday we did Sacramento & San Joaquin with an inside lunch at Casa Flores in Lodi. At the end of our journeys we activated 7 counties and drove 255 miles in our new Chevy Colorado. This may not be the typical contester routine but it works for me.

I worked the four corners of the USA; Alaska, Hawaii, Florida, and Maine. I just couldn't hold a frequency to run, so there was a lot of hunt & pounce. I also avoided the big pile ups and kept spinning the dial.

It was fascinating to hear all the "local" California stations via back scatter on 20m. That has a very distinctive sound on a SSB signal. That was the beauty of being at RF quite locations. I did work some locals on 20m that were within ground wave distance.

I probably ticked off the true contesters by having a real QSO with Bob, W0BH in Kansas. He and his wife do big time mobile state QSO parties in KS, OK, TX, and GA. He was very interested in our operation. This made it an actual QSO party in that we actually had a real conversation instead of a quick exchange. He told me to do it the way I liked and have fun. In our SCUBA diving days I learned about the "WIMP Factor"; what I Mean by Pleasure. If you don't find it pleasurable you don't have to do it. This type of operation works for me.

We used just 20m and 40m. The rig was a Kenwood TS-480SAT. Antenna(s) were a Hustler mast and the appropriate coils mounted on the lid of the aluminum tool box in the bed of our truck. Power was a BIG (50 lbs) Optimum blue top battery, feeding a TGE N8XJK 40 amp 12v to 14v buck booster. The battery lasted all day Saturday and it still had 30% left. Recharged it over night and was good to go Sunday. By not using the truck battery, we didn't have to worry about running it down and not being able to start the truck.

It was a lot of fun, compared to sitting at the home operating desk for 24 hours! Each county and band change was like starting fresh each time. I worked a lot of people multiple times and they were happy to contact me. Each time they asked what county we'd be in next and said they'd be looking for me. I ended up with, 143 contacts, 41 multipliers, and a final score of 11,726. This was a personal best for me. That's not big compared to some fixed base operation, but it was a lot more fun!

73, Emilia Seiferling KI6YYT



---

## NU6S Amador

A week before the 2020 CQP, Fred asked me if I was interested in attempting an Amador County MS low power record attempt. Fred checked the record and it was pretty low, so short of any last minute disasters, we felt sure it would be ours.

Fred is a great CW op (as many know) and a prolific Contester, stateside, as well as in HI as KH7Y. Through the years Fred amassed many awards and plaques for his efforts in DX contests.



Fred at the key.

As for my CW? Not great, but I'm not a bad phone op. In the late 80's thru 2004 with members of the Southern California Contest Club I operated in my many CQWW MM and Multi-Single DX contest expeditions from various countries in the world. In



fact, we won a plaque from our 1998 Mufti-Single effort as FG5BG, we were #1 Carib/CA.

Unfortunately our ol' Fart status (our combined age is 158) has affected our hearing, coping speed, and "butt in the chair" time. Too much sitting is no good for us old folks.

We operated from Fred's station under the call N6US, no surprise as my station consists of Flex



Maestro connected to a Flex 6500 at Fred's place and a couple of wires. Fred manning all CW and me phone. We used his new FT-DX101D and a Steppir 4 element with 40M, wires for 80 and 160M.

All went well, the radio was great, but... has way too many knobs and switches on the front panel to suit me, the antennas and software performed as expected.



Because we are old, we only operated 22 of the 30 hour allotment. But we did accomplish our goal and are not ashamed of our score, old MS record 23K. Our score Total: **787**  
**448 Mults = 57**  
**Total Score = 187,644**

We are already planning our strategy for another record assault in 2021. But we “really” need another old operator so we can put in a full 30 effort. Any volunteers? Oh, that's assuming that we are still vertical next year, Hi Hi.

Oh I forgot the best part; we had a crap-load of fun! .....73 de Fred, K6IJ and Rick, W6SR.

---

### **CQP Mini-Expedition to Glenn and Tehama Counties**

It started off as a third year at an Air B&B in Tehama County, with the dream team of W1SRD, KOBEE, AA1ON and me (W1RH). Due to Covid19 however, this just was not going to happen. Martin could not travel from his home in Massachusetts and Steve and Doris rightfully elected to operate from home.

That left me to come up with something so I decided on a 2-day expedition on the Glenn/Tehama county line, most likely in a rented motor home. The goal was 2,000 Q's and a new Glenn County record. The second operator would be my now son-in-law, Tyler, K6TLR. Since my daughter has a Masters in Public Health, she has not been about to let Tyler get

himself into Covid trouble so I felt pretty comfortable with a team of two.

It ended up as a 4 hour, hot, smoky 300+ Q single day expedition.

So, what happened? Well, it was a combination of Covid19 and the fire danger.

I had my eye on a site well into the Mendocino National Forest that looked like an awesome location, with plenty of fall-off to the east. The fire restrictions in the National Forest put a stop to that idea however, with the Zogg Fire burning not too far to the north.

My second choice was a fairly easy to get to site, run by the Army Corps of Engineers, at Black Butte Lake. I found a good location, again with good fall-off to the east, and did a drive to check it out prior to the contest. What I found was an area with just about everything closed off. Even the park office was locked up, not even allowing access to the parking lot.

I decided to park in front of the park service locked up compound just to see if they had cameras and someone might come out. Sure enough, someone did, both of us wearing masks!

The ranger was very nice but told me that any sort of operation was simply out of the question due to the fire danger and Covid19. Besides that, most of the park had been closed off. I told her that this was not a large group and would be a one-day operation with just me and my son-in-law. She asked me to wait and went back to the office, leaving me at the locked gate. About 10 minutes later, she returned and said she had good news. They would let us set up in a very remote area of the park. She even told me that I would be 247 feet north of the county line! CQP rules require operation within 500 feet of the county line.



This location, shown on Google Maps, above, while not ideal was not bad. We did not have the fall-off, but we did have a clear view to the east, looking over the lake which eventually dropped off to the Valley.



The site was, indeed, remote sitting by itself on the far west side of the park. What was left of a paved road led to the site from the main road.



I had thought about doing this as a two-day operation, setting up and breaking down each day and staying overnight in a motel. There were two problems with this.

1 – I wasn't comfortable with any of the places I saw along I5, from a Covid19 standpoint, with both Glenn and Tehama Counties being among the lowest rated in the state with Covid compliance and number of cases.

2 – Even If we could stay overnight, these were not hotels with protected parking. Leaving the generator and antennas in the truck, unattended, overnight just didn't sit well with me.

For the reasons above, this was destined to be a single day expedition. I figured that we would either go somewhere else on day two or I'd operate from my home QTH (which is what I ended up doing).

The site, while very remote, actually had a chemical toilet, which is shown in the background. It was flat, open and clear of any brush that could be a fire danger with a generator.

Our equipment consisted of a 24 foot mast, Cushcraft A3S/40 meter kit, Elecraft K3/P3, and an Ameritron ALS-1300 KW amp. The generator was a 4KW Generac.



Tyler, being the Wilson Sports rep for Northern California just happened to have a nice canopy that did the job nicely, although we did have the faces of various tennis pros staring back at us.



Murphy was a big problem. Although I had the radio and computer set up and working at home, the K3 just did not want to connect to the computer and the Writelog software. The radio ended up being keyed constantly when connected when we set it up at the site. Same radio; same computer; same cables.

After screwing around for about an hour trying to get the radio to talk to the software, I gave up and we needed to manually input the band/mode. This was fine, as long as we remembered to do this. At one point, we needed to stop down while I changed

the band/mode on a large group of contacts. The primary issue here was probably my unfamiliarity with the K3. I bought it from W6SR about 2 ½ years ago and the only time it has ever been used was at this year's Field Day, where it worked fine and interfaced just fine with N3JFP software. In retrospect, I probably would have been better off bringing my Flex 6700.



Another issue was the mast, which I borrowed from the TV station I worked at prior to retiring. We could only get it up about 15 feet or so. Nevertheless, the site played absolutely fantastic on 20 meters. The East Coast was very loud and everyone was hearing us just fine.

Since we were given an OK to operate until 9 PM, we did try 40 meters but the antenna was so low that it did not play very well at all. There was only a small part of the Phone band where we could get the SWR to be low enough not to trip off the ALS-1300.

I can't say enough good about the ALS-1300. This amp has served me well as a backup amp to my Alpha 91B. It has been extremely reliable and interfaces well with the Flex. My only gripe has been this amp's requirement to reset only by turning it off and back on again. I have to thank Stefan, AF6SA, a former amplifier design engineer, for building a circuit that now does this automatically. It will now

reset automatically after an SWR (or whatever) trip-out just as my 91B does.

While the radio conditions at the site were absolutely excellent on 20 meters, with zero noise, the environmental conditions were far less than stellar. There was little blue sky to be found due to smoke from nearby fires, ash was falling like snow flakes constantly, and the temperature was around 100 degrees. While it did cool off when the sun went down, we finally broke down around 7 PM because 40 meters was pretty useless. When I returned home, I actually had to blow the ash out of the amplifier since so much had been sucked into it. And to think we were breathing that air...



In the end, we made 67 CW Q's and 96 Phone Q's. The nice thing about operating on a county line, however, is that it doubles our total number of Q's. That gives us a total of 326 contacts.....163 for each county, per CQP rules.

The not-so-nice thing about operating on a county line is that you get asked for many more questions like: "How do I log this?". I want to thank Dean, N6DE, for giving us the answers to "How to log this contact" prior to the contest. Dean had sent me the answers for all of the more popular programs so we knew how to answer the question. I must add that while we got asked for a lot of "how to's" on Phone,

I don't think I had one request on CW nor did I have a request for a repeat.

Besides technical issues, logging problems and many requests for clarification on logging, another thing that slowed us down was the lack of spotting on Phone. When Tyler started off the contest on Phone, I decided to take a walk. Received signals were strong so I thought he would have an immediate pileup. After about 15 minutes, I came back and he had only made a few contacts. I asked him to ask for a signal report and the next guy gave us a 59 from the East Coast. Then, I told Tyler to ask the guy to spot us and BOOM.....the pileup began. It appears that the guys on phone are just clicking on spots and no one tunes the band, even though we had a good signal. On CW, and with the Skimmer spotting, this was not a problem. I gave one CQ and immediately had a pileup.

I should also mention that while 3830 has a drop down menu for various types of CQP operations, including county and multi-county expeditions, it really does not have a way to handle county-line expeditions. Why should I care? Well, if there were a way to indicate that this was a county-line expedition on a 3830 report, Matt, WX5S, could then give credit for the total number of Q's for each county in the KB Awards software. Had we operated two days and made 2,000 Q's, this would have been 4,000 Q's spread over two counties for the KB Competition and that would make a huge difference in where I stand as well as Tyler. Not a big deal with the minimal number of Q's we made, but just saying.....

Would I do a county-line expedition from this location again? Well, at least on 20 meters the location appeared to be really good. There was also zero noise and I think we only saw two humans the whole day. I'm guessing the a higher tower, like W1SRD's tower trailer we used in Tehama County in 2018 and 2019, would make a big difference. To

answer the question, however, I did see a much better location to operate from within the park and should that location be available in the future, with no fire or Covid restrictions, I know that location would absolutely scream out a signal on all bands.



Bob, W1RH

## **UPCOMING DX and DXpeditions**

Click the link below to display upcoming DXpeditions.

<http://www.ng3k.com/Misc/adxo.html>

## **MLDXCC Reflector**

The MLDXCC reflector is maintained at groups.io. Visit <https://groups.io/g/mldxcc>

We also maintain a spotting reflector at <https://groups.io/g/MLDXCC-Spots>

We are also on Facebook!  
<https://www.facebook.com>

## **Classifieds**

*Members are requested to review their classified ads each month for accuracy and to resubmit their ads or confirm their desire to keep it running in the next issue.*

**New! "The Serial Box"** (SBOX) by N6TV – Combination Serial Port Splitter, ACOM / Elecraft / SPE Amplifier Interface, FSK/CW/PTT keying interface, and Breakout Box

<https://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/13971>

Serial Box



Serial Box

**"The Y-BOX"** by N6TV – 4-way Elecraft K3/K3S ACC port splitter, Elecraft Amplifier Interface, and Breakout Box

<https://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/13296>



Y-Box  
N6TV

---

Need QSL cards, business cards, club banners?  
Contact Vina K6VNA [vina@sign-tek.com](mailto:vina@sign-tek.com)

---

## **2020 Meeting Dates**

January - 25  
Feb - none  
March - 14  
Apr - 18 Zoom

## **Area Clubs**

Northern California Contest Club -  
<https://www.nccc.cc>

Lodi Amateur Radio Club -  
<http://www.lodiarc.org>

Stockton Delta Amateur Radio Club -  
<http://www.w6sf.org>

Pizza Lovers 259 -

<https://www.pl259.org>

## **ARRL Pacific Division**

Pacific Division Director  
Jim Tiemstra K6JAT  
[k6jat@aol.com](mailto:k6jat@aol.com)

Pacific Division Vice Director  
Kristen McIntyre K6WX  
[kristen@alum.mit.edu](mailto:kristen@alum.mit.edu)

May -9 Zoom  
June - 6 Zoom  
July - 25 Zoom  
August - 22 Zoom  
September - 19 Zoom  
October - 17 Zoom  
November - 13  
Dec - 20

*Dates are arranged to accommodate major contest dates.  
Meeting dates are subject to change. MLDXCC  
traditionally holds a mid-year combined meeting with  
NCCC.*

El Dorado Amateur Radio Club -  
<http://edcarc.net>

Sierra Foothills Amateur Radio Club -  
<http://www.w6ek.org>

Redwood Empire DX Association -  
<http://www.redxa.com>

Calaveras Amateur Radio Society  
<http://calaverasars.org/>

*Please contact the editor to have your club listed here.*

East Bay Section Manager  
Jim Siemons, W6LK  
[jim@siemons.com](mailto:jim@siemons.com)

Nevada Section Manager  
John Bigley, N7UR  
[n7ur@arrl.org](mailto:n7ur@arrl.org)

Pacific Section Manager

Joe Speroni, AH0A

[ah0a@arrl.org](mailto:ah0a@arrl.org)

San Francisco Section Manager

Bill Hillendahl, KH6GJV

[kh6gjb@arrl.org](mailto:kh6gjb@arrl.org)

Santa Clara Valley Section Manager

Brandon Bianchi, NI6C

[ni6c@arrl.org](mailto:ni6c@arrl.org)

Sacramento Valley Section Manager

Dr. Carol Milazzo, KP4MD

[kp4md@arrl.org](mailto:kp4md@arrl.org)

San Joaquin Valley Section Manager

John NZ6Q

[john@litz.com](mailto:john@litz.com)

Treasurer, Sue Allred, K6SZQ

[sueallred@volcano.net](mailto:sueallred@volcano.net)

Publicity Manager, Bob Hess, W1RH

[w1rh@yahoo.com](mailto:w1rh@yahoo.com)

Editor, Doug Philips, WE6Z

[we6z@hotmail.com](mailto:we6z@hotmail.com)

Webmaster, Norm Wilson, N6JV

[n6jv@n6jv.com](mailto:n6jv@n6jv.com)

## **The MLDXCC Newsletter**

Information may be reproduced provided credit is given to MLDXCC.

## **Officers of the MLDXCC**

President, Steve Allred, NC6R

[sallred@volcano.net](mailto:sallred@volcano.net)

Vice President, Bob Hess, W1RH

[w1rh@yahoo.com](mailto:w1rh@yahoo.com)

Director, Rich Cutler, WC6H

[wc6h@yahoo.com](mailto:wc6h@yahoo.com)

Director, Steve Dyer, W1SRD

[w1srd@arrl.net](mailto:w1srd@arrl.net)

Director, Jeff Stai, WK6I

[wk6i.jeff@gmail.com](mailto:wk6i.jeff@gmail.com)

Secretary, Emilia Seiferling, KI6YYT

[ki6yyt@arrl.net](mailto:ki6yyt@arrl.net)