

Sparks from the Spa



A PUBLICATION OF SARATOGA COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

Sept 14 Club meeting

The September meeting was held via Zoom. The Board has decided to hold all the rest of this year's meetings via Zoom. We voted for Mike K2ZIP to purchase an annual license, and the club would reimburse him for the expense.

The main topic of discussion was gathering thoughts about the club holding a virtual hamfest, and what topics can be used for the speaking seminar. There would be a no cost to attendees. The club would assume the costs to run the event, and there were ideas that we could even have some sponsors who would help defray the costs through the use of advertising. The board is looking on this as an experiment, however this would not replace the annual physical hamfest we would hold in the future.

Stay tuned for developments on this situation.

The next club meeting will be on October 12. The board meeting will be held at 6:30, and the general meeting will begin at 7:00 PM. The topic of the meeting is expected to be wire antennae. The Zoom meeting links will go out a few days before the meeting date.

Jamboree on the Air Via ARRL

Scouting's Jamboree on the Air Set for October 16, 17, and 18 08/31/2020

Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) and Jamboree on the Internet (JOTI) will be held this year on October 16, 17, and 18. Register online as an individual or as a group.

Jamboree on the Air is the largest Scouting event in the world. In a typical year, more than 1 million Scouts participate in JOTA, with over 11,000 stations operated by 20,000+ young radio amateurs from 150+ countries around the world.

JOTA details are available on the K2BSA website. The website menu will direct users to additional supporting information. K2BSA's Jim Wilson, K5ND, says many locations are already offering virtual radio merit badge classes "and no doubt will be using similar approaches for Jamboree on the Air."

Interesting items from the CQ Newsroom

Upgraded Space Station Ham Gear Coming Online - New gear replaces equipment that is 20 years old

QSO Today Virtual Ham Expo to Continue - Plans to hold two online hamfests a year, starting next March

Japan to Allow SSB on 160 - Listen for JA prefixes between 1848 and 1875 kHz

Details on these stories and more are online in the CQ Newsroom at:
<<http://cqnewsroom.blogspot.com/>>.

Please read the full story before making comments. **Thank you!**

15th Annual ARRL Online Auction via ARRL

The 15th Annual ARRL Online Auction will open for an "early bird" preview and registration on Thursday, October 8, and will open for bidding at 10 AM EDT (1400 UTC) on Thursday, October 15. The auction is sponsored by GigaParts. The 2020 ARRL Online Auction includes a large assortment of ARRL Product Review items, including an SPE Expert 1.5K-FA HF amplifier, ACOM 120S 160 - 6- meter linear amplifier, Yaesu FTDX101D HF + 6-meter transceiver, and an Icom IC-9700 VHF/UHF multi-mode transceiver.

The ARRL Online Auction also features a wide assortment of vintage books, including The ARRL Handbook, Radio for Everybody, and CQ Ghost Ship.

This year, bidders will find a large variety of equipment, vintage books, novelty items, ARRL bundle packs, and a number of special items donated by the cast and crew of Fox Television's Last Man Standing, starring Tim Allen as Mike Baxter, KAOXTT.

In order to place a bid, you must register on the ARRL Online Auction website. You may browse the website and scope out those "must-have" items without being a registered bidder, and you can register at any time during the auction. If you are interested in some great bargains -- and some great fun -- check out the 2020 ARRL Online Auction, which concludes on October 25 at 10 PM EDT (0200 UTC on October 26 in North America). Registration begins on October 8 at 10 AM EDT (1400 UTC) during the auction preview.

Proceeds from the Online Auction benefit ARRL education programs, including activities to license new hams, strengthen Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) training, offer continuing technical and operating education, and create instructional materials.

The Toy Store

FOR SALE

ICOM IC-7300 STATION

Includes: IC-7300 Transceiver
ICOM SP-38 Matching Speaker
ICOM SM-30 Microphone
ICOM HM-219 Hand Microphone
N6FN Mini-Manual & Original manual
SAMLEX SEC 1235M Power Supply (optional)
12 V. Power Cable

All only slightly used and like new, excellent working condition and in original boxes. Pictures available.

\$1125 with Power Supply

\$1000 minus Power Supply

W1NXB, Peter Ruby

Email w1nxb@hotmail.com 518.792.5607

19 Wing Street

Glens Falls, NY



Special Event Station Ideas Wanted Jim KG2H

I recently was wondering if the club members would like to hold a special event station. This is something club members could do at their home stations. Many of you have come across these on the HF bands .

At the time, the Battle of Saratoga immediately came to mind but it was too late to try to get any decent lead time for announcements in magazines. That is definitely on my plans for next year. I am wondering if any one of you have an idea for the club to celebrate some event. We probably need a lead time of 4 or 5 months. If something strikes you, please let me know. kg2h@arrl.net

ARRL National Convention and Orlando HamCation® Postponed to February 2022 Via ARRL 10/05/2020

ARRL and the Orlando Amateur Radio Club (OARC) have announced that the ARRL National Convention and Orlando HamCation® — which was to host the convention — have been postponed until February 10 - 13, 2022. The convention had been set for next February.

"The joint decision came after considering the national public health emergency including the health and safety of all participants, the uncertainty that continues to impact our organizations, and the reluctance to travel to, and attend, large events," said ARRL CEO David Minster, NA2AA. "We regret the disruption to the hard work already completed by so many volunteers preparing for the ARRL National Convention and HamCation."

"While postponing was a difficult decision, our top priority is delivering a safe and successful HamCation experience for everyone, including our attendees, dedicated volunteers, exhibitors, and service partners," said HamCation General Chairman Michael Cauley, W4MCA.

OARC President John Knott, N4JTK, noted that holding the convention in 2022 will mark the 75th anniversary of HamCation — one of the largest annually held gatherings of radio amateurs in the US. The published gate figure for 2020 was 24,200 for all 3 days.

"We want our diamond anniversary show to be an exciting, five-star event," said Knott. "We look forward to seeing you in Orlando in 2022, and hope that you and your loved ones remain safe in the months to come."

A full day of National Convention programming and training sessions was previously scheduled to precede HamCation. That will be rescheduled for Thursday, February 10, 2022. HamCation will host the rest of the convention on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, February 11 -13, 2022 at the Central Florida Fairgrounds and Expo Park in Orlando — an 87-acre lakefront fairgrounds.

Cauley said HamCation may organize some online presentations and programs for what would have been HamCation 2021 next February. A QSO party is also under consideration. The HamCation website will soon post details, including information for anyone seeking refunds and other options for pre-purchased tickets and exhibit space. Follow HamCation on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Further details and any changes will be shared via these official websites:

Ed Note: the following story was submitted by Brian NJ1F,

K6XX II: 2000-2020

The August 2020 Destruction of the K6XX Station

Or, You are NOT a First Responder if you do not Respond

Bob Wolbert, K6XX

Sunday, 16 August

Howling winds and thunder crashes awoke me a bit before 3am. The weather had been unusually hot, so the windows were open and the sounds of outdoor furniture sliding across the deck and crashing into the walls was, well, awakening. Flashes of light identified the source of the thunder: lightning is rare here so it is not the first thing considered when there are loud 'booms' outside.

We watched the lightning for about 45 minutes (remember, it is rare here). All of the visible strikes were cloud-to-cloud. I eventually returned to bed.

After dawn, the various HTs were tuned to the various fire dispatch and tactical frequencies used in the local area. There were many calls and reports of smoke. Many of them were, as usual, UTL (Unable to Locate, i.e., false alarms). But a large number were actual fires. One of the reports, of three columns of smoke rising near China Grade, was the most disturbing. CalFire refused to send anything to this particular fire, citing lack of resources. Boulder Creek fire responded alone.

Monday, 17 August

Numerous fires continued burning. The China Grade fire was not getting much attention. Only one firefighting helicopter made very occasional passes, several right over my house and uncomfortably low. Low enough that I could easily see this blue aircraft—not a CalFire aircraft—had not been washed or waxed for a very long time. Since the fire was 3+ miles away and apparently not growing, and since there was little evidence of firefighting occurring, I saw no reason to worry.

Tuesday, 18 August

The lone blue helicopter made a few more passes. I counted only 3 all day, but this is not definitive. This China Grade fire can't be very substantial if that's all of the action it commands, right?! Most of the flight path was well away from me.

By evening, this was getting old. The batteries had died in a couple of the handhelds, so they were off while the cells recharged. Smoke was bad, but this was expected with so many local and regional fires burning. A leisurely dinner was had, until interrupted by a text message from K6GHA warning of fire movement. Indeed, the China Grade fire, which until this point didn't seem to even have a CalFire reference number, was getting bad and threatening houses and Big Basin state park. Fire "5-18" was now on the list, but still not receiving much attention or suppression force. Potential evacuations affecting the China Grade/CA-236 neighborhood were discussed on the radio.

I decided that this was a good time to begin implementing my bug-out plan. My wife had made a Costco run earlier in the day and the car was still stuffed, including 100 pounds of rice and cases of canned goods. The truck bed held a Henry 3K Ultra amplifier console, a donation from a local ham selling his QTH that I had hauled home over the weekend. It was sitting there waiting for lift assist, as I'm generally not capable of hefting its 250 pounds. Eventually, both car and truck were safely emptied. Critical papers were removed from the safe and loaded first. Then some of the camera gear. At this point, we determined this was a good time to install my Truck Bed Tent Deck. Packing continued leisurely until dark, when an ominous orange glow became apparent above the treeline to the north-northwest. This definitely was not a sunset and it seemed to be centered on Big Basin Park. Now the urgency kicked up a couple of notches and packing became more hurried.

An alert was received on my phone about 9:30pm, but it was for a different neighborhood quite a distance away. My street and the smaller side streets were not mentioned. I turned on all of the outside lights and opened the driveway gate.

The orange glow got brighter and moved higher in the sky.

Wednesday, 18 August

At 1:30 AM the dog began barking, announcing the unseen but imminent arrival of a vehicle. My expectations of a CalFire truck were dashed when the visitor was a Santa Cruz City cop (14 miles out of jurisdiction). Upon seeing me, dressed only in shorts (it was HOT that night), the pair of cops accelerated down the driveway turning on both lights and siren despite my standing still and waving to them.

The pair of geniuses pulled up next to me and demanded "Are you Evacuating or Not?"

I replied "If I have to", and began explaining that I was awaiting the fire crew so I could point out the fire hydrant and show the gravel and clearing all around the house, which allegedly made it very defensible. While these things should already be on the local CalFire neighborhood maps, it was dark thus a lot easier to point out in person than force the firefighters to figure it out on their own.

The cops wouldn't have any of that. "You have to leave immediately. There is a fire burning."

"Yes, I realize that. The vehicles are almost packed."

"You have to leave immediately."

"I want to show CalFire my fire hydrant and encourage them to use all 10,000 gallons of water in the tanks."

At this point, they took pity on me and radioed in to someone (who?) that my address had a "10,000 gallon hydrant". I don't remember hearing any reply. Then they repeated, "You have to leave immediately."

They pointed to the western and southwestern sky. During the preceding 15 minutes, the orange glow had expanded from approximately 40 degrees to now subtending an arc of 160 degrees. Oops. I stopped arguing and said we will pack the dog and run. They waited in the driveway for a couple more minutes, but then saw that packing the dog was a difficult chore so they finally drove away.

Once the canine was contained, I checked the status of the water pressure pump, which makes the fire sprinkler system work to specification. While in the shack, I grabbed a to-be-repaired K3 transceiver that was alone on a shelf. Then Miki, the dog, and I departed. It was 1:50 am.

I wished the house good luck as it disappeared behind me.

Although the county forced me to have 10,000 gallons of standing storage, a separate fire hydrant line, the repainted hydrant itself, suppression sprinklers everywhere (including the garage, shack, and the attic AND crawlspace areas of the house), all installed at great expense, they didn't matter. The tons of gravel ringing the house and hours of labor cutting the brush and grass perimeter back 150-500 feet likewise didn't deter the flames. A quick engineering analysis concludes that the fire hydrant itself doesn't scare away flames. Evidently a hose and someone holding that hose is also required.

Paying the extra State wildfire "not-a-tax" tax didn't help either.

We spent the night in a Starbuck's parking lot in Scotts Valley. At dawn, I noticed a new voicemail notification on my phone. It reported a missed call/voicemail from 11:32pm the previous night. As my phone had been glued to me for the preceding 24 hours and it had not rung at that time, this was curious. This call was my emergency evacuation notice. Verizon did not ring it through, instead sending it directly to voice mail. The voice mail notification took six hours to arrive.

At a more decent hour, we accepted the generous offer of hospitality from K6GHA. Hours later, Don's house received an Evacuation Warning worrying his wife, so she departed, leaving Don to deal with the three of us. Thank you for your generosity, Don!

Thursday, 20 August -Tuesday, 25 August

We left the area to stay with my sister's family at their grape ranch in Madera County.

After days of calling and writing everyone I could think of that might have some information, including making multiple telephone calls to the direct lines of the CalFire and Corrections facility almost directly across the street from the house, CalFire published a damage map listing my house as "Destroyed". Strangely, their map notes that my address could not be verified, which is curious since there aren't any structures on my side of the street for a mile in either direction.

Looking back, I understand why CalFire has not 'confirmed' my address. Upon its completion in 2002, the CDF final inspector photographed the house's fire resistant implementation and asked permission to promote the design as a fine example of safe mountain building. Since they forgot my house on its night of need, they are likely best served by forgetting it forever.

Friday, 28 August

I'm dealing with the insurance company. Although they believe the house qualifies as a "Total Loss", they need proof before proceeding any further. Due to the wuhanflu, they will not send anyone to inspect and are awaiting photographic proof from me(!). We have evacuated to San Jose and are staying in a beautiful, nearly-new hotel while awaiting clearance to return and inspect the damage.

29 August - 7 September

More dealing with the insurance company. The good news is that with fixed coverage, there isn't much need for negotiating. The bad news is that the payout won't cover rebuilding costs for the original structure. Also attended the local disaster 'faire' and discussed my situation with a couple of the county permitting departments. They claim to offer an "expedited" permitting process for rebuilding, but that process is surprisingly similar to the drawn out, difficult process endured when initially building the place in 2000-2002. Since I was intimately familiar with that chore, I could ask, "How does this differ from the regular, non-expedited process?" The reply was reflexive: "We normally get 100 applications in a year. You are asking us to handle 900 quickly? That isn't going to happen". Ahh, our government; here to help.

8 September

Working with a contractor (wink), I passed through the roadblocks and returned home. At first, the absolute devastation was startling, and I drive past the homesite without slowing. Starting at the bottom of the hill where wedding preparations (Daughter #2) had been proceeding for 19 months, I got out and looked around. Wisps of smoke were still rising from underground. Looking uphill, the most amazing sight appeared: Lisa Tower on top of the hill is still standing! (My towers are named after my girls). Unfortunately, the other guyed towers are now horizontal.

Walking slowly uphill to the house/shack, the rubble is less than 20 inches high. The only structure visible was foundation and slabs of stucco walls, their studs having completely disappeared. In the shack, amplifier transformers and blower housings provided the most apparent evidence of the former radio station. There was no sign of the K4 or any of the K3s. Boatanchor chassis survived, but it was hard to distinguish between a 75A4 and a Viking Valliant. Certainly no plaque or certificate was spared, although a few blackened metal sheets from JIDX awards remain. Rows of ashes shaped like compressed magazines indicated the previous existence of my technical library, including its 1920-present complete collection of QST. These ashes disintegrated at first touch, although some bits displayed the distinctive page number logo of earlier years.

At my property line separating me from the Ben Lomond CalFire camp (yes, they are right next door), I saw a very stark contrast: my land was blackened horrifically, but the CalFire camp didn't seem to have a single burned leaf. [See photo] The difference between my side of the line and theirs was stark. Apparently they protected their stateowned shacks but did not spare a single truck to protect my place. My dedicated fire hydrant CDF (CalFire's previous name) demanded that I install at significant cost still had an unbroken paint coat over the outlet cover: it had not been touched. No one protected my house. But certainly I'm not bitter...

9-11 September

Now that I've actually viewed the dead, it is time to move forward. Unfortunately, the various engineering firms and contractors contacted all come back with the same story: we can't start the rebuilding process yet because the county isn't accepting permit applications! The only emergency accommodation made by the bureau nazis is the suspension of their 3-day limit on living in a self-contained trailer on your own property.

Late Friday afternoon the mandatory forced evacuation was lifted and I no longer had to impersonate a hired hand to access the property. We will live in a travel trailer until an intermediate building is permitted—as in building/septic system permit, not "permission". After that, it is time to redesign a new house/shack. This will take a long time. It was 5 years to design and build K6XX II. Hopefully this time it will be half of that, since no changes are anticipated to the shack or antenna system design. Its performance was operator-limited before the fire.

14 September

I was on-site preparing a parking spot for the trailer when a CalFire truck drove down the driveway. I rudely blocked his path and when he stopped, I yelled "You are about a month too late!" He graciously apologized and I noted that his truck was from the Yuba City area, not the cowardly Ben Lomond stay-at-home non-responders. (Remember, I'm not bitter)

The fire has now been "contained" by the normal definition for over a week, with no new structures threatened for even longer, yet it is still listed as only 90-something percent contained. Now that it is no longer necessary, helicopter traffic is triple what it was during the first two critical days of the fire. Makes one wonder why they are wasting an expensive resource to dampen fuel that likely should just burn out, or at most, direct a small hand crew toward any remaining hot spots. They better not be running up the bill just so they may later claim that they "spent \$N Million fighting the fire". Those efforts and resources should have been dedicated at the beginning, not after the fire had already run its course.

The Complaining Continues

Seems that every time a solar cycle peak approaches, I am without antennas. The only time I was prepared was during the "runt" peak of Cycle 24. There is lot of work required before Cycle 25 reaches maximum.

A couple years ago the house insurance policy doubled. When I questioned this, I was told that this increase could be cut back to "only" 25% if I dropped the full replacement coverage and instead fixing the liability limits. As a thrifty lifelong ham, I accepted that suggestion. Oops.

At least I have some coverage. Several neighbors don't, since most insurance companies no-bid our properties due to the fire risk. (Hummm, I wonder why...) With a little luck we will be able to rebuild a somewhat smaller replacement home on the property. The big house was becoming a liability anyway since the daughters have grown and departed. The hurdles have not stopped: this county is notorious for its agonizing permitting ordeal. Presently, they have obstinately halted accepting any applications (!) for permits.

On the NCCC reflector a couple months ago, I was warned that my youngest, a 2020 graduate, might boomerang back to again live with us. I insisted that wouldn't happen. See how far I go to keep my word?

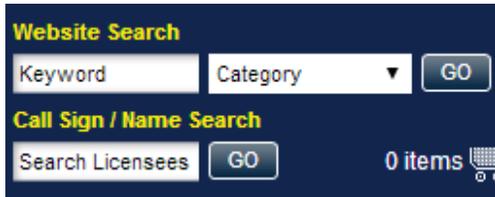
My confidence in the effectiveness of the fire defenses made me miscalculate the relative risk of evacuating the equipment. I estimated a 100% chance of scratching my precious radios, and a tiny chance that they would be damaged. Thus I did not pack any of them. Only the lone disconnected K3, with a label questioning its performance and suggesting investigation and repair, remains of the six contest-grade seats. First-class test equipment, full power amplifiers and 'classic' radios were also abandoned, along with a lifetime supply of PL-259s, ferrites, coax cable reels, electronic components, etc. I really should have made an inventory of my "junk" collection. Instead, I'm presently mentally walking up to each equipment rack and shelf, pointing to the various spectrum analyzers or variable capacitor bin boxes, while trying to remember everything left behind. Plans for repairing various things that survived are complicated by the realization that the required tools are also vaporized. I had just about everything, just the way I liked it, and had even stopped attending the local electronics flea markets except for their social aspect. Oops again.

The shack was a purpose built, separate building, the size of a two-car garage. Its walls were covered with contest plaques demonstrating the effectiveness of the antenna system. A large binder was stuffed with certificates from lesser achievements. I will miss them.

There must be a moral to this story. Hopefully you can see one that eludes me at this point. I've never authored such negative JUG material before, and have written and re-written this multiple times over the past weeks yet the tone is darker with each re-write. Let me end by stating that hardline and Phillystran are not fire resistant. The foam center dielectric of low-loss cable melts and oozes away under heat. Phillystran melts also. Adding 25' of EHS to the bottom of each run probably helps a lot, but when nearby trees are burning and radiating heat right at the guy lines—and especially when those burning trees fall toward the tower—the tower will not remain vertical.

While K6XX is silenced for the foreseeable future, its operator has been offered guest-op seats for CQP and CQWW (TU N6XI & WC6H for your supreme generosity!). Looking forward to hearing you on the air soon.

Have you checked the expiration date on your license? It's very easy to do. One way to do it is to go to WWW.ARRL.ORG, and just fill in your call sign in the search box on their home page. You do not need to be a member of ARRL to use this service.



K2DLL repeater system:

Corinth NY
147.000 MHz +600KHz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode
448.225 MHz -5.00 MHz 91.5 CTCSS encode/decode

Providence NY
147.240 MHz +600 Hz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode.
147.360 MHz +600 Hz (add 91.5 Hz CTCSS to connect to the NYS Network

Sacandaga Reservoir aka Fraker Mountain
147.03 MHz +600 KHz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode

Middleburgh NY
448.925 PL 107.2 WA2TTP-R Steve's Repeater is linked to ours via UHF



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Please be sure to visit our webpage for any late breaking news or newsletter archives.

WWW.K2DLL.ORG

Got News or information you would like to get published? How about your own projects or other things you think would be of interest to Club Members? How about (GASP), a letter to the editor? Contact us at our email address :

K2DLL@OUTLOOK.COM

Upcoming program note

We are looking for input from the membership as to what YOU would like to hear. Program suggestions are always welcome. Please let any of the Board Members know of you ideas.
Thanks