

# The Heterodyne

*Newsletter of the West Valley Amateur Radio Association*

## November Meeting

**To CQ or not to CQ ...  
That is the Question**  
**By Bill Fehring, W9KKN**

**Wednesday, November 8  
Meeting Starts at 7pm**

Meeting Location:  
American Red Cross,  
Silicon Valley Chapter  
2731 N. First Street at Plumeria Dr  
(southwest corner) in San Jose

WVARA Repeaters (W6PIY)		
Band	Frequency	PL
6 Meters	52.580- MHz	151.4 Hz
2 Meters	147.39+ MHz	151.4 Hz
1.25 Meters	223.96- MHz	156.7 Hz
0.70 Meter	441.35+ MHz	88.5 Hz
0.23 Meter	1286.2- MHz	100 Hz

## Club Net

WVARA's club net is on the W6PIY repeaters each Tuesday at 8:30 pm. All repeaters are linked together during the net. The net script can be found at [www.wvara.org/net.html](http://www.wvara.org/net.html) .

**Visitors Are Welcome!**

## President's Letter

### How I Fell in Love with the Digital Modes

I started as an electronics nerd in junior and senior high school. I loved building electronics projects, especially kits.

There was a radio club in high school which encouraged me to get my novice ticket. I still remember sometime in 1960, getting on the Long Island Railroad to ride into Manhattan to take my test at the FCC office. I had ridden the train into New York many times before, but this time I turned way downtown instead of uptown where I had gone on all previous trips. I arrived at the FCC office more than a little bit scared. I managed to pass both the written and code tests, and anxiously waited for my ticket to arrive in the mail. When it did I was WV2NOO.

I rounded up an SX-99 receiver and a Heathkit 75W transmitter kit, and then I hit a serious snag. I am dyslexic and have a great deal of difficulty with written English. However, CW QSOs are in written English with a big dose of CW OP jargon. The jargon I could handle, but I could not get a string of letters to become a word at any speed. Even now, I need to write



them down before I can recognize which word they represent. My novice year went by with almost no QSOs.

Fast forward to the year 2000, 40 years later. Somewhere about 1975 I had learned to write English, although I was and still am a slave to spell checkers. My software startup had just gone bankrupt. I was at loose ends and said to myself, "I'll study up and get a no-code tech ticket. I have caving friends who use the WA6BAI repeater in Kings Canyon National Park to communicate. I can join them."

I studied the ARRL "Now You're Talking" book and took the test. I aced the test and the examiner said, "Why don't you take the general test, it won't cost you anything." So I took the general test cold and eked out a pass. I walked out with a database entry that became KG6JOH and a piece of paper that said in essence, "Learn 5 WPM CW in the next year and you can have a general."

I had learned 5 WPM 40 years earlier and figured I could do it again. So I got the CW CDs and re-learned the code. At the same time I studied for the extra exam because I wanted to stop having to jump through hoops and just be a ham. Within the year I had passed both exams and became AE6JV. But I still wasn't doing very much on the air. I was one of those hams that built equipment but rarely used it.

I joined the West Valley Amateur Radio Association (WVARA) because the West Valley is where I live and I wanted to support at least one open repeater as a way of giving back to the hobby and to "pay" for the open repeaters I used with my caving buddies.

WVARA takes Field Day very seriously. As a new member, I went up to the site and saw the CW tent, the 3 SSB tents, and the digital tent. I was invited into the CW tent to do some operating. I declined because learning 5 WPM for the test doesn't mean you can make it in the real world. I did a bit of operating in a SSB tent, and then Phil, W6PK, who was in charge of the digital tent, invited me to do some PSK31 operating. I had found my niche. PSK31 was like the computer chat rooms I had supported in my last paying job. Typing I can do with my eyes closed and the incoming words appeared in print, so I could read them the way I read books, papers, etc.

I look back at my log and see the first 3 years as exclusively PSK31 contacts. Then I branched out to RTTY for the North American QSO Party. Finally in March 2013 I decide to try to contact TX5K on Clipperton Island. On 15M I managed both a SSB contact, and my first CW contact. I was decoding the CW partially by ear but mostly with the K3. I was sending from the K3's memory. After listening as my call was sent many times in the pileup, I could recognize it when TX5K came back with it and press the other button to send the exchange.

Six months later, my log shows what I described as my first CW QSO with AI, W6SQQ in Orange, CA. The log shows he was using a K3 with a G5RV and had nice cool weather. I copied that QSO by typing it into my computer and reading the screen. I still have that file.

My log from that time shows many digital contacts, a scattering of SSB, and almost no CW. Then came the W1AW portable operations. I was hooked on contacting the W1AWs, and I made many more CW contacts, but these were certainly not rag chewing. They were as mechanical as the digital contacts when the operators just play macros at each other.

These days, when I operate CW, I am either contesting or DXing. In either case, the vocabulary is small enough that I can recognize the words -- CQ UP NA TU 5NN ? -- without having to think about the letters. If I need to think about the letters, I still use a computer to change them into words, eliminating many of the real advantages CW has. I can use a straight key, but slow down alarmingly when confronted with a paddle.

Somewhere along the line, I managed to earn a DXCC and a Grand Slam WAS -- WAS on CW, digital, voice. I still consider digital to be my "home" mode. I have had many enjoyable rag chews on PSK31, particularly with Michael, VE3NOO and Mary, KC9TIE.

As an example, today I got a LotW acknowledgment for a FT8 QSO with Jim, ZL1LC. My log shows two other QSOs with him on PSK31. It also notes that he operates from Waiheke Island, Oneroa with a Icom 706 and a Cushcraft vertical. I don't know if we got away from the macros, but certainly exchanged more than signal reports and grid squares in those QSOs.

I will continue to struggle with CW and be happy that there are so many modes people can use. Almost anyone can find something that works for them.

73 Bill AE6JV

## **November 8 Meeting**

To CQ or not to CQ ... that is the question.

This particular question will be answered by our very own Bill Fehring, W9KKN, who will take us through space weather and how it affects terrestrial propagation. In the end, the question we all consider when turning on a rig is "How will the bands be today?" Bill will take us through some online resources that work to predict band performance based not on beacon networks, but on the solar activity of our little corner of the universe. He will help us understand how to interpret the data they present in order to answer that question, what metrics are used, and hopefully allow us some better experiences during this low period of sunspot activity.

As well, this Wednesday evening will be your chance to participate in some home grown democracy while you vote for next year's WVARA officers.

73,  
K0XI

Meeting Location: Meeting Room 5 at the Silicon Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, 2731 N. First Street at Plumeria Drive (southwest corner) in San Jose. Most of us come in through the side entrance on the southwest side of the building — look for our red WVARA sign on the side where they park all the Red Cross trucks. Cookies will be served, and of course visitors are welcome!

If you haven't been to the Red Cross, "talk-in" is usually available on the Association's repeaters. Best choice would be 2m/220.

As is tradition, don't forget that we will meet at Dish'n'Dash at 6pm for some food prior to the meeting at 7pm at the Red Cross building on 1st St.

And as an alternate, a sub-set of members meets at Panera Bread at 503 Coleman Avenue at Autumn Parkway at the same time. This is at the far end of San Jose Market Center at Coleman and Taylor.



# The Northern California DX Club wants to help you get on the air on the HF Bands

## Registrations Are Now Being Taken for All Classes

- Class descriptions are now posted on the NCDXC web site for each class. You can register for as many classes as you wish.
- To access them go to [ncdxc.org](http://ncdxc.org) and click on the Elmer Project tab. At the bottom of the page describing the Project is a red **register button** taking you to our Registration Page.
- There you may enter your name and contact information, read a brief description of any class and choose those that you wish to take. Dates and times for the classes are also shown.
- Class descriptions are available to read without signing up for any classes.
- The instructors name and email address is available so that you may contact him or her.
- Classes begin on September 23 and are absolutely free.
- Addition information may be found in an article in the October 2017 issue of QST Magazine or by coming to our talk on Saturday, October 21 at 1 pm at Pacificon.
- Classes are arranged in three tracks.
- After a couple of fun, introductory classes on the joys and benefits of HF operation there are 6 Track 1 classes designed to help prepare the General class license exam.
- Track 2 covers basic HF operating and includes classes on equipment selection, station building and HF operating techniques.
- Track III covers more advanced topics such as advanced SSB, CW and digital mode operation, antennas, propagation and equipment specifications.
- Classes are taught using two methods
- Four classes are taught by the Elmer in his shack. The Elmer has no fixed program but will be ready to answer any questions you may have and walk you through a difficult topic. He can also demonstrate and let you try various facets of HF operation. The instructor will contact you, using your sign in information, to set up a mutually agreeable time for the class. These One on One classes carry on the ham radio Elmering tradition.
- The remaining 17 classes are taught using Power Point slides delivered by WebEx. No special software is required and WebEx works with Windows, Mac OS and Linux. When you sign up for a class you will receive a Welcome Message from the instructor containing simple instructions on how to log in to WebEx. You can see the slides and hear the instructor and he or she can hear you.
- When in a Power Point class please MUTE YOUR MICROPHONE to avoid background noise disturbing other participants.
- NCDXC members have invested many hundreds of hours putting the Elmering Project together. Our goal is to get you on the HF bands making QSOs. Our instructors have many years of experience in their topics. We will do our very best to make the classes fun and interesting. There are no dumb questions. We want you to succeed!
- Just go to [ncdxc.org](http://ncdxc.org) and click the Elmer Project tab to get started!

<b>WVARA Net Check-Ins (W6PIY)</b>					
<b>Tuesdays at 8:30 PM</b>					
<b>Call Sign</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>10/10/17</b>	<b>10/17/17</b>	<b>10/24/17</b>	<b>10/31/17</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>
AB6XS	Kevin	X			
AE6JV	Bill	X	X		X
AF6AE	Bill	X	X	X	
AG6YO	Kevin	X	X	X	X
K0XI	Bobby				X
KC6ZKT	Steve	X			
KE6MT	Rex			X	
KF6EMB	Svend		X	X	
KI6SLX	Peri	X	X		X
KJ6ZZI	Michael	X	X	X	X
KK6VF	Kevin	NET	NET	NET	NET
KK6ZOD	Henry		X		
KM6GVO	Eric		X		
KM6KJI	Yoon	X	X		
N6FYR	Matt	X	X	X	X
N9CU	Andy	X	X		
W6ESL	Tom		X	X	X
W6IA	Mark		X	X	X
W6PK	Phil	X			
W9KKN	Bill	X		X	
WB6KHP	Dave	X	X	X	X
WC6YJ	Clay	X	X	X	

## Treasurer's Report

Here are preliminary financial reports through October, 2017. Why preliminary? The October statement for the checking account has not arrived yet, so the checkbook has not been reconciled. I do not expect the numbers to change when it is.

The major expense in October was the Insurance Payment. Everything else was routine - dues received, a \$20 donation (Thank you!), correcting a spelling error on the title for the tower trailer etc.

DUES are now due for 2018. Please either use the website (WVARA.org) to pay your dues, or bring them to the November meeting. Anyone who does not pay by Jan 1, is at risk for being dropped, especially if you did not pay dues in 2017. (Those who paid for either '16 or '17 are on the current roster.)

My thanks to everyone who is current for 2018;

Scott Anthony, KA6ZOV  
Clay Couger, WC6YJ  
Brian Davis, KJ6WH  
Larry Goodwin, KG6ENF  
Charlie Norman, AB6VS  
Robbie Norman, KC6QBF

Mark Sayre, W6IA  
Steve Sergeant, KC6ZKT  
Jean Higham Sergeant, KD6UME  
Kent Werges, K6KWW  
Michael Wheatley, KM6LHD  
Dean Wood, N6DE

If you believe you're paid up, and are not on this list, my apologies. Please let me know.

*Peri Frantz*

*KI6SLX*

*WVARA Treasurer*

[treasurer@wvara.org](mailto:treasurer@wvara.org)

### **2017 West Valley Amateur Radio Association Board**

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Kevin Smith, KK6VF, 2017-2018

The Heterodyne is published monthly by the West Valley Amateur Radio Association and sent to all club members via the web. Please obtain permission from the author to re-publish any article in this publication.

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