

THE CIRCLE CITY COMMUNICATOR

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CORONA NORCO AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

March 2011 – Editor & Rumor Monger: Fred Roberts, froberts-w6tkv@att.net

WHEN THE WORLD ENDS

When I have a completed issue of our newsletter, I really do expect to be able to distribute that issue to all CNARC members.

Well, my computer had a severe case of Leprosy and so the issue left home - and died along the way and never came home.

THE LATEST TECHNICAL NEWS

- 1- Ratio of an igloo's circumference to its diameter = Eskimo Pi
- 2- 2000 pounds of Chinese soup = Won ton
- 3- 1 millionth of a mouthwash = 1 microScope
- 4- Time between slipping on a peel and smacking the pavement = 1 bananosecond
- 5- Weight an evangelist carries with God = 1 billigram
- 6- Time it takes to sail 220 yards at 1 nautical mile per hour = knotfurlong
- 7- 16.5 feet in the Twilight Zone = 1 rod sterling
- 8- Half of a large intestine = 1 semicolon
- 9- 1,000,000 aches = 1 megahurtz
- 10- Basic unit of laryngitis = 1 hoarsepower
- 11- Shortest distance between two jokes = a straight line
- 12- 4536 graham crackers = 1 pound cake
- 13- 1 million-million microphones = 1 megaphone
- 14- 2 million bicycles = 2 megacycles
- 15- 365.25 days = 1 unicycle
- 16- 2000 mockingbirds = 2 kilomockingbirds
- 17- 52 cards = 1 decacards
- 18- 1 kilogram of fresh falling figs = 1 FigNewton
- 19- 1000 milliliters of wet socks = 1 literhosen
- 20- 1 millionth of a fish = 1 microfiche
- 21- 1 trillion pins = 1 terrapin
- 22- 10 rations = 1 decoration
- 23- 100 rations = 1 C-ration
- 24- 2 monograms = 1 diagram
- 25- 4 nickels = 2 paradigms
- 26- 2.4 statute miles of intravenous surgical tubing at Yale University Hospital =

1 IV League

27- 10 dings in your fender = 1 decadent

28- 100 Senators = Not 1 decision

Your Editor is sometimes struck by an incoming e-mail just as he sits down to write this Newsletter ... fortunately, this was one of those times.

VE REPORT

Well, we have a new brand new, fresh out of the box VE who went from Technician to Extra in the shortest time so far - one Test Session for Technician and General, and for the second in the following next Test Session. Extra.

Rick Diaz has used two Test Session, and he has had two callsigns - his first call was KJ6LUB... and his second call is NQ7RD (one carefully designed to match his initials).

And ... he is now part of our VE Team. It doesn't get any better than that!

WANDERING de Fred-W6TKV

This tale is about CNARC member Dick Moll, N6XUC asking me a question in 1990 which had a very interesting and very definite effect upon me. And, it's why I think of Dick as my "CW Elmer" - more on that as you read on.

In 1990, we had monthly club contests. A typical contest was for each member to have as many QSOs with as many members as possible via 2M Repeaters, but only 1 QSO per a given Repeater. The winner received a small plaque hailing his/her success.

Well, on a day in 1990, Dick-N6XUC asked me a question related to our contests. It was, "Why don't we have a CW contest, Fred?" My response was, "OK Dick, we'll do that next month.", and while I was giving him that answer, I was thinking, "I'm going to whip you at this!". When I checked my logs, however, I found that my total CW experience amounted to just:- a) Just 4 months of CW as a Novice in 1952, QSO's 25, and b) another 25 QSOs over a short period in 1972. That's just 50 QSOs in 38 years - my last QSO was 28 years ago!

Well, after blowing 28 years of dust from my strait key, reviewing the alphabet and refreshing my non-existent keying skills, I found my code speed was about 10 wpm. With such outstanding (?) skills, I took action.

Every evening when I got home from work, I went directly into my ham shack, fired the rig up, and called CQ at 10 wpm (my dinner was a brief interruption). I realized my call, W6TKV, suggested I was a skilled CW operator who was trolling for beginners so as to help them improve their code speed. Many responded to my CQs at the speed of light, and so I became quite proficient at sending "QRS" as in "slow down". Some slowed down while others simply disappeared as if I had a serious case of leprosy.

I remain indebted to all those who stopped by for a short or lengthy QSO. By the end of the month by being on the air every night, my code speed improved to 19-20 wpm.

At the end of the month, I asked Dick who had triggered this CW contest, "How many contacts did you have?", and he said, "78, how about you?" My answer was, "184". So now you know why for the past 21 years, I have always referred to Dick as my "CW Elmer". Without his request in 1990, I would never have touched a key to this day.

Prior to my great awakening, I might occasionally ask someone, "What is your code speed?". Going through the leaning cycle, however, I learned that we really have multiple code speeds. The highest speed is where you are in a contest but the exchange is fixed - you can listen for a couple of transmissions before you make contact. Another speed is where you copy enough to fill in the blanks and you have no trouble continuing the QSO. And finally, there is another speed where you not only can copy everything, but can mentally correct the other station's spelling errors.

My main use of CW later on turned out to be in 2 areas, contesting and in chasing DX.

The annual ARRL Sweepstakes contest comes in two varieties - CW, and a week later, Phone. I usually had entered just the Phone contest, but I entered both CW and Phone contests in the QRP category based upon the likely-hood of there being fewer competitors, and hence, a better change of winning in the Orange Section category. The result of that weekend? I now have 2 plaques hanging on a wall in my ham-shack.

On to chasing DX. One night, I was sitting in my ham-shack and working on some QSL cards. My radio was turned on and sitting on 20M - it was just on, not tuned to any signal. All of a sudden, there was a b-i-g signal, and an Italian station was calling CQ in a European Contest. Well, I started to reach toward my KW Amplifier to turn in on ... but then I thought, "Do I really need another Italian station?" And then, without any thought at all, I reached for my transmitter and cranked the output power setting down as far as I would go, and then called the Italian ... and he came back to me.

Wow, what a thrill! I even beat the other stations who were also calling him. Well, I ended up working 8-10 other European stations in several countries.

A little later, I really got curious about the power level I had used, so I measured it and found it was just 4 watts. I was really impressed - QSOs with just 4 watts as compared to 1,000 watts had I turned my amplifier on. Keep in mind, however, that my beam antenna was at 60 ft, and the band conditions were quite good.

I would never have turned my transmitter power down to the stop had I never operated QRP in that one contest. It just would never have occurred to me.

What followed shortly after that was my pursuit DXCC on Phone with 4 watts. When I called a station, I just gave my call, nothing else. And, after I got my report, I would give my report as "5/9 running 4 watts".

In operating like this, you do acquire some interesting things and stories along the way. To be sure, I had a great deal of fun chasing DXCC with 4 watts on phone. Most everyone who is operating QRP is operating on CW, not on Phone. And, I know why ... you definitely don't work as hard on CW as you do on Phone.

I ended my DXCC QRP chase when I reached about 130 countries all due to my CW Elmer Dick Moll, N6XUC.

My most amusing DXCC QRP contact occurred when I reached 99 countries. I had failed to work the good U.S.A. which also counts as a country. So, I tuned around on 20M for my 100th country, and worked a station on the east coast and said "Thanks for my 100 country". I don't believe any other U.S. citizen has ever worked the U.S. as their 100th country. I have to ask around about that. ☺