



PAARAGraphs

Celebrating 61 years as a *real* ham radio club—Since 1937

Newsletter for the Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association, Inc.



CALENDAR

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| Jan | 9, | PAARA Meeting , 7:30
Menlo Park Recreation Center
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park 7:30-9:30 PM |
| Jan | 14, | PAARA Board Meeting , 7:30
Red Cross Blvd. 400 Mitchell Ln., Palo Alto |
| Jan | 15 | PAARA Winter Party
(see page 2) |
| Feb | 6, | PAARA Meeting , 7:30 |
| Feb | 11, | PAARA Board Meeting , 7:30 |
| Mar | 6, | PAARA Meeting , 7:30 |
| Mar | 11, | PAARA Board Meeting , 7:30 |



Program

January 9, 1998
7:30 P.M.

Speaker:

Not confirmed at press time
Check on NET Monday night before meeting

PAARA Radio NET every Monday evening at 8:30 P.M., local time
on the 145.230 -600 MHz repeater, PL tone off



PAARA PONDERINGS

de VIC BLACK, AB6SO

As I am no longer your club President, I have renamed this column PAARA Ponderings. When we elect a new President, that person can write a separate President's column. I especially want to thank all of you who made my term as President such a gratifying experience. I decided not to run for the office this year so I could spend more time building and operating. I also need time for my health to recuperate. I will continue to work on special projects and will be an active Board member.

The President's position is still unfilled so here's a chance for you to contribute to a great club. Don't be shy. Volunteer today. The Board is very strong this year and will support your efforts to move the club forward. We have plans for many new and exciting projects which will make PAARA one of the premier clubs in California.

Our sixtieth anniversary year was a great success. Let's keep the momentum going into the future. Let others know, both on and off the air, about our successes. The club's future depends on a continual influx of new members. Invite new hams to join our fun activities. New members have the potential to make your PAARA experiences more exciting and satisfying.

PAARA ended the year with more than \$4000 more in club funds than at the first of the year. We are on very firm financial ground at this time thanks to the support of the club members in our fund raising efforts this year. Much of these funds also came from a generous endowment from the estate of **Gerry Wagstaffe W6NIR**. When making your own financial plans for the future, you may wish to remember PAARA in some small way. In the future, we may establish scholarships or other forms of endowments to help carry the Amateur Radio message to others. Your generous gifts can make this happen as well as act as a tribute to your own life.

At the December board meeting, your Board of Directors approved a family plan for PAARA membership in response to

(Continued on page 3) Ponderings

Miscellaneous Dates

Flea Market at Foothill

(schedule will be listed in the Spring)

PAARA Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association

meets 1st Friday 7:30 each month, Net 145.230 each Monday 8:30,
contact: Vic Black, Jr. AB6SO, (650)366-0636.

EMARC Electronics Museum Amateur Radio Club

Meets 4th Friday 7:30 each month,
contact Sheldon Edelman 650-858-2176, Edelman@richochet.net

NCDXC Northern California DX Club

meets 2nd Friday 7:30 each month, repeater for member info 147.360, each
Thursday 8:00PM, contact Bob Mammarella KB6FEC 408 729 1544.

NorCalQRP Northern California QRP Club

Meets 1st Sunday each month, contact Jim Cates 3241 Eastwood Rd., Sacramento, CA 95821.

Perham Foundation

contact Jerry Tucker WA6LNV 650-961-3266

SPECS Southern Peninsula Emergency Communication System

Meets each Monday 8:00PM on Net 145.27, 224.36, 440.80 MHz
contact Mike Hastings KB6LCJ, 408-243-6745 or 408-249-6909.

SCARES South County Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Meets 3rd Thursday 7:30 each month, San Carlos City Hall.
Net is on 144.45 & 444.50 (PL-100) 7:30 Monday evenings.

contact Dick Collins K6ANN 650-593-8952

SCCARA Santa Clara County Amateur Radio Association

Operates W6UU repeater 146.385+ Nets: 2m, W6UU, 7:30 Mon; 10m,
28.385, 8:00 Thur. Meets 2nd Mon each month. Contact: Jack Ruckman ACGFU

SVECS Silicon Valley Emergency Communications

Operates WB6ADZ repeater (146.115 MHz+)
contact Lou Stere WA6QYS 408 241 7999

WVARA West Valley Amateur Radio Association

operates W6PIY repeater 147.39+, 223.96, 441.875, 1286.2

Meets 3rd Wed every month. Contact Glen Lokke Jr. KE6NBO
at 408 971 8626, or glokke@pacbell.net

Disaster Services, PALO ALTO CHAPTER, American Red Cross

Meets 3rd Wed. each month 7:30PM, HF, packet, BBS, ATV, OSCAR
Gateway, NASA satellite. Contact Alan Ball 650-688-0423.

SAN JOSE CHAPTER, American Red Cross

contact Scott Hensley KB6UOO, 408 249 7093, fsh@richochet.net



Winter Party

Thursday, January 15th

Country Harvest Buffet

2670 El Camino Real

(corner Kiely & El Camino)

Santa Clara

Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association, Inc. PO Box 911 Menlo Park, CA 94026

President.....(vacant)

Vice President.....Dave Bailey, WS6W.....(408) 730 5215

Secretary.....Andreas Junge KF6NEB.....(650) 233 0843

Treasurer.....Doug Schliebus, W6HXL.....(650) 851 0727

Trustee/Property/Badges.....Fred Canham, K6YT.....(650) 948 9238

ARES Officer.....Lily Anne Hillis, N6PGM.....(650) 325 5484

Club Historian.....Steve Stuntz, K6FS.....(650) 322 4952

Advertising.....Bob Korte, KD6KYT.....(650) 595 1842

Webmaster.....Andreas Junge KF6NEB.....(650) 233 0843

Board of Directors

Charles Grandjean, WD6FAF '98

John Buonocore, KD6ZL.....(650) 366 1658 '99

Terry Conboy, N6RY.....(510) 949 5388 '99

Steve Stuntz, K6FS.....(650) 322 4952 '99

Vic Black, AB6SO, past Pres......(650) 366 0636

(see "Calendar" for Board meeting times, visitors welcome)

PAARAGraphs Staff

Editor.....Wally Porter, K6URO.....(650) 494 7038

Database.....Bill McElhinney, KA6LZI.....(650) 325 9808

PAARAGraphs e-mail address: wmpporter@aol.com

Submit material for PAARAGraphs by the 15th

PAARA Website <http://www.qsl.net/paara/index.html/>

The Board Minutes

Dave Bailey (WS6W), Secretary

PAARA Board Meeting December 10, 1997

PRESENT:

Vic Black (AB6SO)- Pres.

Dave Bailey (WS6W)- Sec.

Doug Schliebus (W6HXL) Treas

Fred Canham (K6YT)

Charlie Grandjean (WD6FAF)

Bill Rausch (AA6PA)

Steve Stuntz (K6FS)

Andreas Junge (KF6NEB)

Wally Porter (K6URO)

ABSENT:

Dave Meacham, (W6EMD) V.Pres. John Buonocore (KD6ZL)

The meeting was called to order by Vic (AB6SO). The November 12 PAARA Board meeting minutes were read by Dave (WS6W) and approved by the Board. Doug (K1DIT) gave the treasurer's report. Seven members paid 1998 dues, and all current bills are paid including the P.O. box rent. Doug also proposed a family membership, in which one member pays \$12 and receives the newsletter and full privileges; and each additional member at the same address pays \$6 and receives no newsletter, but all other privileges. This was approved by the Board. Wally (K6URO) gave the PAARAGraphs Editor's report. PAARAGraphs will be going to press earlier this month to be mailed before the holidays.

Old Business:

1. Dave (WS6W) said that Dan (WB6STW) and John (N6WBP) won net operating awards this month.

New Business:

1. The meeting raffles will begin in January. Doug (K1DIT) will be in charge.
2. The winter party will be held in January, 1998, at the Coun-

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(Continued from page 2) Board Minutes

- try Harvest Buffet in Santa Clara. **Dave (WS6W)** will reserve a date and time. We will install officers, give the 60/60 Awards, and receive the Field Day plaque.
3. **Vic (AB6SO)** reviewed a list of projects for next year.
- Acquisition of a club trailer replacement (RV or van).
 - YL auxiliary or special interest group.
 - Standing committees:
 - Membership outreach committee to contact former members and potential new members to remind them of our activities and prepare membership brochure.
 - Publicity committee to make press releases and contact ham magazines and web sites about club events.
 - Awards committee to create, document, and present awards.
 - Elmers list for the web page.
 - CW class for no-code techs.
 - New Ham class.
 - Promote special interest groups.
 - Family memberships to encourage more families to participate.
 - More Special Event stations with public exposure. It would be good to obtain a special event call and achieve WAS and DXCC.
 - Purchase necessary promotional equipment and audio-visual aids. Suggestions overhead projector, new smaller PA system, club-owned slide projector, banner with club name.
 - PAARAGraphs committee. A special feature "PAARA Personalities" would be a unique addition to the newsletter.

Other Business:

1. **Bill (AA6PA)** said it was time to renew our AMSAT membership. **Charlie (WD6FAF)** moved that we pay our \$60 membership and donate \$140 for a total of \$200. **Steve (K6FS)** seconded the motion, and it was approved by the Board.

2. It costs \$800 per month to maintain our web site, and the Board approved a \$50 donation to the person doing that.

3. **Fred (K6YT)** renewed the W6OTX callsign using Form 610B.

The meeting was adjourned by **Vic (AB6SO)**.

Submitted by Dave Bailey (WS6W)

(Continued from page 1) Ponderings

member requests. The first membership will cost \$12 and will include a PAARAGraphs subscription. Each additional club membership from the same household will be \$6, but will not include the PAARAGraphs subscription. When paying your 1998 dues, simply list the additional member names and call signs and add \$6 per person.

Your Board has approved donations to AMSAT to help defray costs of launching the Phase 3D satellite and to the Web site owner who generously provides space for PAARA on the Internet. You can take pride in the fact that you are

(Continued on page 7) Ponderings

PAARA Meeting Minutes

DECEMBER 5, 1997



submitted by: **Dave Bailey(WS6W)**, Secretary

President **Vic Black (AB6SO)** called the meeting to order, and the introductions were done. We had several first time attendees this evening: **Doug (KF6II)**, **Vince (KO6FO)**, **Lissa (KF6JEN)**, **Mary Ryan**, and **Robin McClish**. **Andreas (KF6NEB)** upgraded November 29 to Tech Plus, and **Robin McClish** passed her exam at the amateur radio class on October 25. **Doug Schliebus** changed his call from **W6HXL** to **K1DIT**. Andreas' first contact after upgrading was a VE7 on 80-meter mobile.

Announcements :

1. DECEMBER:

- 7 Sunday 7:00-11:00 a.m. Livermore Swap Meet
 - 7 Sunday 11:00 a.m. Nor Cal QRP Club Meeting
 - 10 Wednesday 7:30 p.m. PAARA Board Meeting
 - 12 Friday Northern California DX Club
 - 18 Thursday 7:30 p.m. SCARES Club Meeting
 - 18 Thursday 7:30 p.m. Red Cross Disaster Services Meeting
 - 20 Saturday 1 1:00 a.m. VEC License Exams in Sunnyvale
 - 26 Friday 7:30 p.m. EMARC (now FARS - Foothill Amateur Radio Society) Club Meeting (subject to change)
2. For club badges, see **Fred Canham (K6YT)**.
3. Meeting raffles will begin in January.

Continuing Business:

1. The PAARA 60th Anniversary Special Event Station operated on Saturday, November 8, on the General Class segment of 40, 20, 15, and 10 meters and on 2 meters, 440, and 1.2 GHz, with a repeat performance on Sunday. **Vic (AB6SO)** had a log up front. The station made 52 contacts, about half of which were DX. There were many visitors, including several SWLs. We have received requests for certificates from people who contacted the station.

2. The following officers and Board members were elected for 1998:

Vice-President: **Dave Bailey (WS6W)**

Secretary: **Andreas Junge (KF6NEB)**

Treasurer: **Doug Schliebus (K1DIT)**

Board Members:

Steve Stuntz (K6FS), **John Buonocore (KD6ZL)**, and **Terry Conboy (N6RY)**.

Charlie Grandjean (WD6FAF) has another year on the Board.

3. **Andreas Junge (KF6NEB)** was appointed as PAARA Webmaster for our very own internet web page. Check it out at

<http://www.qsl.net/paara/index.html>.

We will add to it as time goes on.

4. **Andreas (KF6NEB)** wants to start an HF mobile special interest group. Let Andreas know if you want to join that

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WEB WANDERINGS

de Vic Black, AB6SO

Want a ham swap page? Try <http://www.fishnet.net/~ko6oy/swapage.htm>. Voted one of the Top 100 Web sites, it's slow-to-load, but superior to mailed swap lists involving paid subscriptions. No charge! Just another example of Hams helping Hams for the love of our great hobby.

If you liked the Dec. slide show "Ham Radio Railfanning" by **Mike Leland KD6PIW**, try <http://trainorders.com/railcam/railcamlatest.htm>. Every train that passes the digital camera on world famous Tehachapi Loop is captured here. Locomotives actually cross over the rear of the trains passing through a tunnel on a corkscrew loop as they struggle up the 2.5% grade on the world's busiest single tracked mainline. Look carefully--you may see some of your Ham/photography buddies in the background. There are no lights to blind engineers so at night you'll see only a black screen. Incidentally, "fan" is a moniker for "fanatic". The international term for rail fans is "foamers" because their eyes glaze over and they begin to foam at the mouth while talking about their hobby. Not unlike some Hams!

A commercial railfanning site is at <http://altamontpress.com/index.html>. Click "Dispatcher's Office" then "Railfan Amateur Frequencies" for a list of repeaters frequented by Ham rail fans. A map shows linked 440 repeaters (the Intercity Tie) used by rail fans. It covers the Bay Area and the Central Valley from Chico to Bakersfield. I use it to work Fresno with only 2 Watts from inside my Redwood City home.

Jay Miller WA5WHN suggests, "Try the following 2 URL's if you are really interested in 6 meters. <http://www.clinet.fi/~jukka/webcluster.html> and http://www.cswnet.com/~ka0nnn/page3.html#SMIRK_HOMEPAGE/ The first URL is very helpful since it is a true Internet DX spotting cluster. You will notice quite a few PACTOR stations listed." (LATE NEWS: SMIRK (Six Meter International Radio Klub) has moved to http://6mt.com_Vic).

PAARA member **Mike Leland KD6PIW**, joined a 50 MHz mailing list by sending email To: link6-request@smrn.com. Subject: subscribe. To post to the list, send email To: link6@smrn.com. Also try the 6 meter links at <http://www.qsl.net/vk1zfg>.

Russ Sakai KH6FOO maintains an EME and tropo ducting page at <http://www.qsl.net/kh6foo>. There are tips on what weather causes ducting which occurs June through August. In 1997, Hawaiian 2 meter beacons were strong into California as early as May and as recently as October 30 with one February report. El Nino may affect ducting this year. Russ's page has a link to **Paul Lieb KH6HME**, world terrestrial 2-way QSO record holder on 2 meters (2695 miles), 220MHz, 432 MHz and 1296 MHz (all 2579 miles), 902 MHz (2523 miles), 2304, 3456, and 5760 MHz (all 2474 miles). Photos show Paul's station and towers (looks like a commercial microwave site). Paul's ATV pictures have reached So. California. If your

computer has Real Audio, you can hear what the beacons sound like from the Web page. Otherwise, download Real Audio from Paul's Web page.

Paul's beacons, at 8200 feet on the flanks of Moana Loa Volcano, take him 3 hours to reach if QSO conditions are right. He transmits on the beacon frequencies (not the calling frequencies) at 50.061, 144.170, 432.075, 1296 MHz and 10.1 GHz. Other beacons to listen for are KH6HI on 50.065 and KH7R on 144.184 MHz. Listen from the Santa Cruz Mountain ridges with a view to the Pacific when condx are right or during meteor showers. Report beacons heard to **Paul Lieb**, PO Box 511, Pahoa, HI, 96778.

Chuck Adams K5FO recommends the CW Reflector: Subscribe, To:

Major-domo@qth.net with Body: subscribe cw. Unsubscribe, To:

Major-domo@qth.net with Body: unsubscribe cw. To post, send to cw@qth.net (Please, CW issues only). For digest version, Subscribe to cw-digest through major-domo@qth.net. For archives, <http://www.qth.net/cw-digest.archive>. To contact list owner, email to owner-cw@qth.net.

Chuck is qualified to add Ph.D. after his name, but he prefers CP-60. Yep, it stands for the ARRL Code Proficiency Award for perfect copy off the air at 60 words per minute! You can contact Chuck at adams@sgi.com or check <http://reality.sgi.com/adams/index.html>. There's an online code course which he is developing into a book.

Alan Dujenski KB7MBI recommends HF Propagation Prediction Charts maintained by **Jerry Hall K1FD** at <http://reality.sgi.com/adams/index.html>

(Continued on page 7)Wanderings

(Continued from page 3) Meeting Minutes group or start another group.

New Business:

1. The PAARA Winter Party will be held in January, 1998. If you want to help, come to the Board Meeting on Wednesday.

2. Awards: **Bill (KE6CHQ)** and **Gerry (WA6LNV)** won the Monday Night Net Award. **Dan (WB6STW)** won an award for contacting the Special Event station .

Operating News:

1. There is a syzygy (meaning the planets are lining up) coming up this week, which should be great for DX. The Geminids meteor shower will peak December 14.

2. **Dan (WB6STW)** worked some East Coast 10 meter repeaters and worked from Alaska to South America on 10 meter simplex.

After the social break, PAARA member **Mike Leland (KD6PIW)** presented a talk and slide show on ham radio and railfanning. Mike has been a rail fan since he was 3 years old and became a radio ham because of his experiences with other ham railfans and his close family friendship with **Dusty Doster**.

Submitted by **Dave Bailey (WS6W)**

Especially Prepared for Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association, 5 Dec., 1997
 by Mike Leland, KD6PIW.

Railroad Radio Frequencies:

The Rear End Device (End of Train Monitor) transmits packet telemetry on 457.9375 MHz. This safety device informs the engineer of the status of brake airlines, etc. A scanner can listen for this short range weak signal and will often alert you to an approaching train.

The American Association of Railroads assigns FM channel numbers to operating frequencies. The first two digits of the channel number represent the transmit frequency and the next two numbers are the receive frequency. An example is the Niles Canyon Railway on channel 3535, which translates to 160.350 MHz for both transmit and receive. Standard frequencies are listed below. You will only need to load local road frequencies into your scanner in order to listen to approaching trains or you can use a search function with limits set at 160.215 and 161.565 MHz. Refer to the chart below for the AAR Frequency Assignments.

Chan.	Freq. MHz						
07	160.215	30	160.560	53	160.905	76	161.250
08	160.230	31	160.575	54	160.920	77	161.265
09	160.245	32	160.590	55	160.935	78	161.280
10	160.260	33	160.605	56	160.950	79	161.295
11	160.275	34	160.620	57	160.965	80	161.310
12	160.290	35	160.635	58	160.980	81	161.325
13	160.305	36	160.650	59	160.995	82	161.340
14	160.320	37	160.665	60	161.010	83	161.355
15	160.335	38	160.680	61	161.025	84	161.370
16	160.350	39	160.695	62	161.040	85	161.385
17	160.365	40	160.710	63	161.055	86	161.400
18	160.380	41	160.725	64	161.070	87	161.415
19	160.395	42	160.740	65	161.085	88	161.430
20	160.410	43	160.755	66	161.100	89	161.445
21	160.425	44	160.770	67	161.115	90	161.460
22	160.440	45	160.785	68	161.130	91	161.475
23	160.455	46	160.800	69	161.145	92	161.490
24	160.470	47	160.815	70	161.160	93	161.505
25	160.485	48	160.830	71	161.175	94	161.520
26	160.500	49	160.845	72	161.190	95	161.535
27	160.515	50	160.860	73	161.205	96	161.550
28	160.530	51	160.875	74	161.220	97	161.565
29	160.545	52	160.890	75	161.235		

Some Local Rail Frequencies:

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Road Frequency: 161.505

Burlington Northern-Santa Fe, Sacto Valley & Feather River Cnyn: 160.515

San Joaquin Valley: 160.935

California State Railroad Museum, Old Town, Sacramento: 160.440

Feather River Rail Society Portola Railroad Museum., Portola: 161.010

Niles Canyon Railroad: 160.695

Peninsula CalTrain Road Frequency: 160.815
Roaring Camp & Big Trees, Felton: 151.925
San Jose Trolleys: 488.6375
Santa Cruz, Big Trees & Pacific, Felton: 160.995
Union Pacific (Southern Pacific), Oakland-Roseville/Martinez-Tracy:
161.550
Western Railway Museum, Rio Vista Junction: 161.355

Some Cool Web Sites For Further Information:

1. Live digital camera at the world famous Tehachapi Loop. Shoots a picture whenever a train passes by. Has information about the Tehachapi Loop with maps, history, etc. <http://trainorders.com/railcamlatest.htm>
2. A commercial railfanning web site is found at <http://altamontpress.com/index.html> Click on "Dispatcher's Office" and then on "Railfan Amateur Frequencies" for a list of repeaters frequented by Ham radio rail fans. Also included is a map of linked 440 repeaters (the Intercity Tie) used by rail fans in northern & central California. It covers the Bay Area and the Central Valley from Chico to Goshen, near Bakersfield.

Pacific Locomotive Association 1997 Polar Express Trains

Want to scan for Santa Claus? Check this out....

The Pacific Locomotive Association has released it's 1997 Polar Express Trains schedule leaving from Sunol. Tickets are \$6. Dates are Dec 7, 13, 14, 20, 21. The train will be decorated with holiday lights for these night train rides. Take along a camera and tripod and set your scanner to the Niles Canyon Railway frequency, 160.650 MHz.

If you miss these special excursions, you can still ride the train at 10 am on the first and third Sunday of each month. (Try it on the way home from the Livermore Swap meet).

Call the Association at (510) 769-8326 for reservation information.

(Continued from page 4) *Wanderings*

home.att.net/~jerhall. More than 90 color charts are available which plot frequency against Coordinated Universal Time for a given propagation path. To use the charts, go to the world map and click on origination and destination points for the path.

Charts display estimated probabilities for propagation with Maximum Usable Frequency (MUF) for two degrees of probability and Lowest Usable Frequency (LUF) for 1-Watt and 1500-Watt signals. LUF is slightly higher for SSB signals. Modern IONCAP+ software computes charts for a calendar month based on short-term estimations of observed solar flux. They are superior to magazine charts prepared 3 months in advance using 6- or 12-month solar flux moving averages. The site explains chart and software use, solar flux measurements and has an author's biography with his credentials.

A Near-Real-Time world MUF Map, updated every 30 minutes, is at <http://holly.cc.uleth.ca/solar/www/real-time.html>. Contour lines plot MUF at 3000 kilometers with present sun spot number and A index. Absorptive auroral zones are shown for polar regions as well as the sunrise/sunset terminator and locations where the sun is 12 degrees below the horizon approximating the HF propagation enhancing gray-line zone.

Hidden transmitter hunters should try <http://www.west.net/~jay/hunt>. A feature article, "Cat and Mouse", describes Chico CB T-hunt games. CB is used to attract non-hams to T-hunting and eventually ham radio. The article, written by Ian Kluft KO6YQ, mentions Mike Polkinghorn K6PUD, both of the West Valley ARA.

Ham Radio Online is listed as "the World's Leading Amateur Radio web site". This online magazine has editorials, feature articles, an educational section, interactive bulletin board, calendar, real-time propagation and emergency information (earthquakes, volcanoes, severe weather, etc.). The Ham Radio Resources section includes lots of photos, equipment spec sheets and many links to other sites. Try them at <http://www.hamradio-online.com>.

Macintosh users rejoice! There's a web page with Ham software for you at <http://www.mv.com/ipusers/wd1v/page5.html>.

Lastly, try <http://www.uark.edu/studorg/w5ym/ham-links.html>. There are nearly 60 categories of Ham links with hundreds of individual Web pages. Vic Black, AB6SO

(Continued from page 3) *Ponderings*

represented in these worthwhile endeavors.

Gerry Tucker WA6LNV is spearheading a drive to replace the club's aging and cumbersome Field Day trailer with a motorized RV or van along the lines of the Xerox emergency communications van. The idea is to locate a stripped down RV and rebuild it with VHF and HF operating positions. This could be the start of a true club station. The RV, if big enough, could also be used for board meetings and storage of club audio-visual aids. Let your officers and board members know if you support this as a worthwhile, long term, club

project.

PAARA has started a SIG, or Special Interest Group, for HF mobile operation. This is listed on the club's Web page and will facilitate meeting other like minded individuals. SIG's are unstructured, no obligation, low commitment groups. Think of them as clubs within a club. They can be entirely social or springboards for standing committees or club speaker programs. If you have a particular interest and want to meet other PAARA members with the same interests, contact PAARA Secretary and Webmaster Andreas Junge KF6NEB.

Start a new SIG or join one or more existing ones. No approval is needed, just bring along an active interest in a particular amateur radio sub group. Possibilities for SIG's might be T-hunting, Packet Radio and APRS, Special Events, YL Group, Satellite Operation, VE's, Young Hams Section, VHF, DX, CW, QRP, Contesting, Ham Internet Operations, PAARAGraphs, Club Station, etc. A sign up sheet will be available at the January club meeting.

When I tested for Advanced Class, one examiner told me she expected me back in a month for the Extra Class exam. "You'll enjoy studying for it", she said, jokingly. "It's all about Space Travel". Well, it wasn't exactly about space travel, although it did involve satellite communication. Now comes word that the US is going back to the moon and PAARA will be there! PAARA members **Clint Hancock KD6H** and **John Kohli KF6KYL** were chosen as ground controllers for the Lunar Explorer launch. Kind of like a 2-meter net control station, only more so! Sounds like a potential club speaker's program in the works.

In his ARRL Pacific Division Update for December, 1997 **Brad Wyatt, K6WR**, the ARRL Pacific Division Director reports, "General, Technician Plus, Technician and Novice Class amateur operators may request a vanity call sign on or after December 2, 1997. The details for requesting a vanity call sign follow the pattern used on the previous gates. QST, Pacific Division Updates and other publications detail the use of Forms 610-V and 159 for filing electronically and in paper document format. The fee is \$50 for the 10 year license."

A list of potentially available callsigns is located at the QRZ! Web site at <http://www.qrz.com/index.html>. Click on "Vanity Calls". Note that the FCC requires that a callsign be vacant for a period of at least two years before it can be reassigned. Check the ARRL's Web server at <http://www.arrl.org> for information on applying for a vanity callsign.

Along these lines, PAARA Trustee **Fred Canham K6YT** reports that the PAARA club callsign W6OTX has been renewed for another 10 years.

December QST lists the 1997 ARRL June VHF QSO Party Results. **Vic Black AB6SO** took Second Place overall for Santa Clara Valley Section and First Place for 220 MHz and 440 MHz in the Single Operator category. **Rich McAllister K6RFM** was Seventh Place overall for the section in the Single Operator Category. Compared to HF, VHF contests are rather low key events. Many participants spend some time ragchewing. Although it is acceptable to operate from home, a lot of the

(Continued on page 9) *Ponderings*



PROGRAM NOTES:

PAARA Program,
December 5, 1997
— Steve Stuntz, K6FS

Guest speaker was **Mike Leonard, KD6PIW**, enthusiastic railroad fan. who with his dad and our own **Vic, AB6SO**, had ventured into wild country to photograph railroad trains, current and historical.

The thrill in Mike's presentation, which was augmented by projection slides, was the use of amateur radio (mostly 2-meter handheld FM) between observers "out on the line" to coordinate photoshots of trains as they labored up grades, through river gorges, and over plains.

Showing and discussing trains from a depth of knowledge only a dedicated rail-fan could have accumulated over years of study, Mike gave us insights into contemporary rail operations across the entire U. S. and the railroads' use of radio communications and sensing devices to monitor the state of individual units as well as entire trains, enroute. By luck, a Caltrain commuter rolled by during his talk, and Mike gave us a listen to the pre-recorded voice report transmitted by a track-side sensor, regarding the identity and status of the entire train.

The sensing devices now in use can detect and transmit by radio to control points as well as to the operating crew, abnormalities in the operating conditions of each unit in a train, from an overheated journal - the traditional "hotbox" - to a major mechanical problem.

One significant feature of Mike's talk was his description of the way radio is used by dispatchers and controllers to communicate orders to train crews from control-points not unlike air-traffic control facilities. Most of this is done by direct VHF voice, relayed as needed through repeaters. Crews of course can "talk" directly to controllers as well.

Mike augmented his talk with handout sheets describing "Railcam" a remotely controlled daylight only video system for monitoring trains (freight, mostly) climbing over or descending from the Tehachapi Pass, in the mountains between Bakersfield and Mojave. This route is unique. In order to maintain a usable 2.2% grade, the maximum practical for heavy-duty cargo hauling, it was built in a series of climbing curves, at one point passing over itself on viaducts, so that a

TREASURER'S REPORT

DOUG SCHLIEBUS, K1DIT (ex-W6HXL) Treasurer

November 1997

Income.....	\$4,295	YTD.....\$12,411
Expenses.....	\$778	YTD.....\$7,493
Net Return.....	\$3,517	YTD.....\$1,401



Activity:

- 7 Members paid dues already.
- All current bills are paid including PO Box rent.
- Net Return (Profit) is up considerably from 1996.
- PAARA has about \$4,000 more in the bank than this time last year.

Balance Checking as of 12/04/97

...\$7,021 (Auction net of \$3,526 included)

Doug K1DIT, Treas. 12/10/97

long train is literally chasing its own tail as it negotiates the Pass. Originally built in the 1870's, this is reputed to be the busiest track in the world.

The program was capped by an impressive series of color-slides, taken by Mike himself and his doughty companions in the field, of trains enroute, at rest, and in historic collections. Included was a masterpiece multi-flash shot of a locomotive at rest: the wind-up of

the talk was a series of slides showing the "portable" rail system used to carry salt harvested from Bay Area tidal collecting ponds to processing-plants, visible each autumn from Bayshore Freeway (101) near Redwood City.

Additional handouts were provided, giving data on frequencies used by rail services up and down California (all in the 150-160+ mHz range) and two web-sites that can be tapped into for data, schedules, and even photos of live trains. One, giving history, maps and live TV digital camera shots of trains at the Tehachapi Loop, is: <http://trainorders.com/railcamlatest.htm>

The other, covering commercial "railfanning", giving rail-fan amateur frequencies, a list of repeaters used by ham rail fans, and a map of linked 440-mHz repeaters used as an inter-city system to pass rail-traffic info in northern and southern California, is: <http://altamontpress.com/index.html>

Readers interested in "railfanning" by radio will be interested in the accompanying dope-sheet listing American Association of Railroads frequency assignments. It was prepared to supplement Mike's talk, and contains more info on local, regional and state-wide radio channels. Note reference to use of a scanner to track rail activity.

-30-

PAARA-Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association P.O. Box 911, Menlo Park, California 94026-0911

Club meetings are on the first Friday of each month, 7:30pm at the Menlo Park Recreation Center, 700 Alma Street, Menlo Park, CA. • Radio NET every Monday evening, at 8:30pm, on the 145.230-600 MHz repeater, PL tone off. • Membership in PAARA is \$12.00 per calendar year which includes a subscription to PAARAGraphs. • Make payment to the Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association.

SAM SAYS

CQ QRP de KF6ML

When I joined QRP Amateur Radio Club International many years ago (I'm member #3369) - operating QRP meant under 100w !!! (it's now 5w CW and 10w PEP SSB). So I've actually operated mobile QRP (then) running 100w SSB with tube type transceivers. I used center-loaded Master Mobile coils (remember those?). Today, I'm still running 100w mobile with solid state gear and use W6AAQ's screw-driver antenna (still center loaded - variable coil). I do drop down to as little as 5w PEP SSB at times.

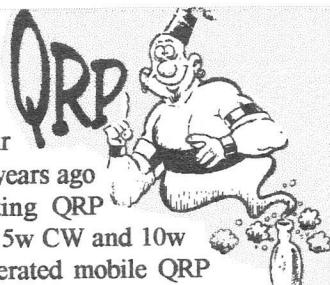
Ever make a 75m dipole with 60' on one leg and 14.5' on the other? Won't work? We do it all the time when we run mobile on 75 - a loaded vertical and a poor excuse of the other leg (ground plane) being the car (approx. 14.5' in my case). No wonder efficiency is down to the 2% to 3% figure. So I was talking to other mobilers about a possible solution and efficiency gain. Why not string the other leg(s) with wire under the car chassis? How many "radials?" I'm thinking about using 9 radials for 75m, 3 for 40m and 3 for 20, to see if it really helps. Not too popular idea as it will require over 1,000' of wire to do this. I will tie-wrap it under the car in a zigzag fashion, staying away from electrical wires, suspension gear and drive train areas. **Will bring my car to the February meeting** and you will see (and Hear) the results. Of course, we all have "bent" our dipoles in our small city lots so why not on a car? Interesting, isn't it. Let's see if it really helps.

72's Sam KF6ML

(Continued from page 7) Ponderings

enjoyment comes from setting up in a portable location, trying out new portable antenna configurations and interacting with passers-by. A club entry in one or more VHF contests is a possibility this year. Think of it as a VHF Field Day.

With determination and an open mind, anything is possible.
Vic AB6SO ☺☺



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 (be sure to include your name and call)



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