Ham Radio and the Voyages of the Manteño

Join explorer and author John Haslett for an evening filled with images and adventure tales highlighting two expeditions he led in the late 1990s. In his new book, Voyage of the Manteño: The Education of a Modern-Day Expeditioner (St. Martin's Press), Haslett recounts how he built a series of giant rafts, similar in design to Thor Heyerdahl's famed Kon-Tiki, and then sailed them on the open sea. Haslett's expeditions were sponsored by ARRL, Yaesu Radios, Hustler Antennas, and many others, and were filled with classic ham radio adventures.

John Haslett has spent the last fifteen years leading expeditions and researching the ancient cultures of Pre-Columbian Ecuador. In 1995, with the help of an isolated community of Ecuadorian mariners, he built a 30,000-pound, full-scale replica of an ocean-going raft used by the ancient Manteño people, and then voyaged on the open sea for thirty-eight days. Haslett was elected to The Explorer’s Club in 1998, and later that year he flew the Club’s flag on his second raft, voyaging for a total of eighty-five days on the Pacific. His expeditions have yielded large amounts of technical data and practical knowledge about the Manteño people and their coastal trading network, and in 2000, Haslett teamed up with noted archaeologist Dr. Cameron McPherson Smith to publish “Construction and Sailing Characteristics of a Pre-Columbian Raft Replica” in the Bulletin of Primitive Technology. In January of 2007, he published his memoir of his first decade of exploring, Voyage of the Manteño: The Education of a Modern-Day Expeditioner (St. Martin’s Press). Haslett’s call sign during his expedition’s was KC5KHA/MM.
Two months ago Randy Graham, KG6OTE, covered propagation forecasting software. And then last month we learned about sunspot numbers, solar flux, and the A and K indices and got some ideas about what different values meant for HF propagation. Well, to use these tools you need to get your hands on them. So let’s find out where to find them.

One source that many of you already know about is the broadcasts of stations WWV and WWVH which contain geophysical messages that provide information about solar terrestrial conditions. WWV and WWVH broadcast time and frequency information 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. WWV is located in Fort Collins, Colorado and WWVH is located on the Island of Kauai, Hawaii. WWV radiates 10,000 W on 5, 10, and 15 MHz; and 2500 W on 2.5 and 20 MHz while WWVH radiates 10,000 W on 5, 10, and 15 MHz, and 5000 W on 2.5 MHz. Geophysical information is broadcast from WWV at 18 minutes after the hour and from WWVH at 45 minutes after the hour. The messages are updated every 3 hours. Of interest to amateur radio operators is that the broadcast includes time announcements (in Zulu), standard frequencies for calibration, solar flux, and the mid-latitude A and K indices. Their recent and expected space weather condition reports can also be helpful.

One of the easiest to understand websites for finding solar and geomagnetic data is http://dx.qsl.net/propagation/ . This gives you the Solar and K indices that you need for the “W6ELProp” software that Randy told us about. Also try “ARLP023 Propagation de K7RA” which is free to ARRL members each week via E-mail. Some other helpful sites are http://www.spacew.com/www/realtime.php that provides high-resolution maps of Maximum Usable Frequencies (MUFs) for 3,000 kilometer radio signal paths and http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/forecast.html, which gives the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center 3-day report of solar and geophysical activity.

One additional tool that some hams use is to listen to beacons around the world. These are stations, on permanent amateur radio frequencies, are scattered around the world and can be listened for to see if there is a path open on that band. A useful website sponsored by the Northern California DX Foundation is http://www.ncdxf.org/Beacons.html. It has a long list of beacons and information on programs which help find and use these beacons.

Another helpful website is QRZ.com’s “Last 100 DX Spotting Reports” http://www.qrz.com/p/dxc.pl which is updated every 10 minutes and lists QSOs reported to them by QRZ members from around the world. By looking at this, you can also quickly identify DX opportunities. Another useful “spotting” website is http://www.dxsummit.fi.

Up to this point, we have been dealing with what affects the received signal strength of our transmissions. But that is only one side of the equation. The other, “noise”, is often lost sight of. It is the balance between these two, signal strength and noise, that allows us to understand what we hear. So next month we will look at the many sources of interference that make up “noise” and explore some ways to minimize it.

Sub-audible Tomes
Bruce Nolte, N1BN
Dynamic Repeater Mapping

At last month's General meeting I met Arthur Harris. Arthur was first licensed back in the the 1970s and recently renewed his license, now holding the call sign KI6SXN. Arthur and I were discussing which repeaters might be best for his location in Sunland and he told me about an internet discovery. It is a webpage that has both a text list of repeaters and, best of all, a dynamic mapping system to display repeater locations and data.

To see this great system at work just go to ( www.levinecentral.com/repeaters ) and select the state of your choice. Using the check boxes, select which repeater bands you want to see. The core of the display technology is google maps. There is a price to pay here in speed, as the data takes a bit of time to load. But when it is loaded you have zoom and navigation controls just like google maps.

The database seems to be using mainly open repeaters. When you click on a repeater marker, an info box pops up and displayed are the frequency,
transmit offset, and PL tone if needed. If there happens to be more than one repeater at that location you will find that the info box has folder tabs to let you page through the various repeaters. In general, this is a powerful system, which I hope gets updated from time to time to keep it useful.

The (www.levinecentral.com/repeaters) is linked into a larger web site (www.ham-shack.com) which contains much useful info and links for the Ham Radio community. I want to thank Arthur KI6SXN for the great tip to check this out. Go explore it for yourself.

73 Bruce N1BN
PRC Member Profile

Tom Berne, W6TAG

Tom Berne, W6TAG, was born in Los Angeles, raised in Los Angeles, attended high school at Flintridge Prep in La Canada, college at Pomona College, and med school at USC, so he is definitely a California native son. He is Professor of Surgery, USC School of Medicine, LA County-USC Medical Center, specializing in general, trauma and critical care surgery. He and his wife, Cynthia Berne, N6NCE, have three children, Susan, Katherine, WD6CVQ, and John, AJ6O (whose son Alex, 11, is KE5VYT). You can see they are a Ham radio family. Tom and Cynthia currently live in the Silver Lake District of Los Angeles.

An older teenage friend and next-door neighbor got me interested in Ham radio during high school. I got my Novice license in 1952, WN6SUS, upgraded to technician, then let it lapse during college and med school. Then in the 1960’s, when two of my teen-age children showed an interest in amateur radio, my interest was renewed. I took the tests again in 1976, down at the FCC office in Long Beach. I got as far as Advanced Class when I hit the “20 wpm CW wall”. Then my son got his Extra Class license and embarrassed me into finally passing the code test and getting my Extra Class license.

My main goal in Ham radio is to expand my technical knowledge and involvement with emergency communications. I am particularly involved with assisting our local Community Emergency Response Team with their communications and working out how CERT communications activities can gain access in times of wide-spread disaster, to the established amateur radio emergency groups in this area (ACS, DCS, ARES, etc.) I currently belong to ACS, DCS and ARES.

I am not sure how I heard about the Pasadena Radio Club, but I think it was PRC member Lee Zanteson, W6FPO, who “Elmered” me back in the mid-70’s when I came back into Ham radio when I really needed the help. My long-range plans for my amateur radio involvement are more or less what I am doing now…attending the PRC and its events, emergency communications, more time with my Ham grandson, and trying to learn about the many new technical advances in Ham radio, particularly digital modes. I have done some HF, DX/award chasing, contests, DXpeditions, rag chewing, etc. I have taken some trips where Ham radio played a part: some mini-DXpeditions to Guam, Saipan, the UK, Australia, and Cyprus.

Ham radio has made my life richer, allowed me to share a hobby with my wife, a son and daughter, and now a grandson (and maybe a few more grandchildren). My wife, Cynthia, N6NCE, a General Class licensee, is very supportive of my interest in amateur radio. She is currently Secretary of the Pasadena Radio Club. I don’t remember exactly who asked me to become a Board Member of PRC, but the idea interested me so I said “yes”. It has been a very interesting and enjoyable experience.

I would like to make a pitch for the club to make a special effort to encourage young people to become amateur radio operators. I worry that without lots of new young hams the FCC may decide that they have “better” uses for our precious radio spectrum. Also, by getting kids into amateur radio before they decide what to do with their lives, we can encourage an early interest in science and engineering, a direction that I believe is critical to the future success of our country.

Tom has had a long history in Ham radio and is now looking to upgrade his skills, as all of us should. There have been so many new fields added to our already worldwide capabilities that the horizons are almost endless. We should all try to learn some of the new modes of communication that are open to us, due to our interest in amateur radio. Tom is right, we should encourage the younger generation to join us and to get involved in the new ideas as well as the emergency communications that are so important in our “new” world of today. Thanks Tom!

Merrie Suydam, AB6LR
Meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by President Peter Fogg.

Peter welcomed everyone and asked if there were any visitors present. There were two guests: John Self K6VFR who is reviewing material to return to active ham radio and Arthur Harris and wife Leda. Harris is also getting back onto ham radio.

Speaker: Vice President Bruce Nolte introduced the speaker, Michael Scofield N6OKG, who spoke on Radio Frequency Reuse over Terrain Geography.

In appreciation, Bruce presented Michael with a gift of a framed personalized call sign.

Vice President: Bruce mentioned that former member Don Girard, who refurbished the beam antenna that the Club uses for Field Day, had passed away recently.

He then passed out Field Day plaques to some of the members, in appreciation for their efforts this year.

Future Speaker Schedule:

September: John Haslett, KI6MCB Topics: The Voyage of the Manteño. A lively talk about a "Kon Tiki" type voyage that also used Ham Radio to support its mission.

October: Field Day video by Bruce Nolte N1BN

November: Clint Bradford K6LCS, D-Star and AMSAT

There was a refreshment break at 8:15PM.

Treasurer: Harry Brumer gave the Club assets as $5079.04.

Refreshments: Gene Roske will do refreshments for the September meeting.

New Business:

Michael Nicholson, K6CUG, reported on his experience with the Cherry Camp Valley Cub Scouts ages 9-11. They made contacts on 40 meters and with WIN (via the internet) made contacts with Leeds, England and Homer, Alaska.

Mark Seigel, W6MES, announced a Technician class to start Sept 16 if there are enough participants. If not, he will do a Technician class for which he has already five signups.

Phil Barnes-Roberts, WA6DZS, announced a swap meet this coming Saturday in Redondo Beach. He asked anyone who needs a badge to see him. He is also beginning to do some phone patching.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48PM.
We left Pasadena Thursday and traveled to Mesa Arizona, arriving at 6:30 PM after an uneventful trip where ominous clouds surrounded us as we drove through the desert.

Choices had to be made as there were many interesting speakers and their topics. These are summations of the speakers and their topics we attended this weekend.

Friday was the first day of the convention with meetings starting at 1:00 PM with a presentation from Carl Gardenias about service opportunities in the ARRL. He spoke about the organizational make up of the Southwestern ARRL section. He explained about each of the different volunteer jobs and how they interacted.

Next was Mark Spencer with a dummies talk about DSP fundamentals. He was followed by Marty Woll with a talk on choosing the right Coax.

Saturday was the first full day. We started off with a presentation about the VP6DX operation. Milt Jensen gave the talk and explained the photos and how they traveled by air and sea. This presentation lasted two hours, but was well worth it for anyone who might like to go on a DX expedition.

Next stop was the luncheon. The featured speaker had been called away because of hurricane Ike. Michael Gray substituted, speaking about the tethered balloons along the border with Mexico. The food was good as was the speaker.

The last presentation of the day for us was called Ten Meters is Alive and Well, presented by Keith Schlottman and Bob Farrow. They discussed the properties of ten meters. An interesting fact about the band is that the band opens when there is a contest. A discussion of the contests that include ten meters was discussed. Ten-Ten International was discussed as one way to increase the use of the band with their contests and other programs to make good use of the ten meter band.

Saturday ended with the main banquet. Like the luncheon, the guest speaker was also called up because of the hurricane. Mark Spencer gave a short talk in place of Mark Sloan. The dinner was excellent too.

Sunday, the last day, started off with Paul Bennett making a presentation on APRS. We then followed that talk with one on Echo Link / IRLP from Morgan Hoaglin and we finished up with Carl Gardenias on energizing Amateur Radio Clubs. This was different in that the audience took an active role in the program. Carl had good things to say about the Pasadena Radio Club.

The end of the convention was the final drawing for the prizes that had not been claimed and for the top prizes. No, I did not win a thing, just had a great time.

Harry, Mercedes, Ken, Hal, a runner & Ted at Islip

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Vice-President N1BN n1bn at charter dot net (323) 257-5502
Secretary N6NCE cberne at juno dot com (323) 665-6289
Treasurer K7IB k7ib at arrl dot net (626) 355-4501
Members At Large Tom Berne W6TAG
Pamela Royce W6PNW
Randy Graham KG6OTE
Past Officers Ray Overman KJ6NO
Jacob Portukalian KDSFEG
Bruce Nolte N1BN
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Club Net KF6FEM
Mike Dinko (626) 797-8082
Bulletin Editor AC6VV
John Minger (323) 256-0046 ac6vv at arrl dot net

Thank You for your support of The Pasadena Radio Club, and amateur radio hospital emergency communications

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Refreshments at the next meeting will be provided by Gene Roske, AE6GR.
This Month at the General Meeting:
Tuesday, September 23rd, 2008 @ 7:00 pm

Ham Radio and the Manteño
John Haslett, KI6MCB

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Bill and Dan taking down a digipeater antenna

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More AC100 Photos

Craig, John & Roz at Shortcut Saddle

Merrie at the database

What’s your bib number??

Our Little Old Generator

5:00 AM Start of Race in Wrightwood