

# SUNSPOTS

**REDWOOD EMPIRE DX ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 750834, Petaluma, CA 94975

A DX and Contest-minded Amateur Radio Club serving the California coast north of the Golden Gate Bridge

**Volume XXIII**

**Number 2**

**February 2020**

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## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Wednesday, February , 2020 at the Boulevard Café & Grill, Petaluma. If you need directions please call one of the club Officers

6pm— Social Hour in the Lounge

7pm — Dinner and Meeting

8pm -- Program: Bob Wilson, N6TV – Everything you need to know about USB and serial interfaces



## REDXA President's Commentary

It's hard to believe that it is already February! If you missed January's meeting, you missed a great presentation by Propagation guru Carl Leutzelschwab with an update on Cycle 24 and a review of predictions for Cycle 25.

CQP results have been posted and The PL259's (1,371,470) beat us by 250K points only submitting 7 logs in the small club category.. We had 12 logs for

## President's Commentary (cont.)

1,019,162 points. I'm sure next year we'll give them a run for the top spot. The top scores from some REDXA members, N6ZFO easily won Lake county with 191K points. N6YEU was the top dog in Madera county with 76K points and K6RIM was tops in Marin with 56K points. KE6ZSN won Napa County with 90K points. N6IE wins Sonoma county with 265K points.

HU1DL in El Salvador has had a nice signal on the bands the past few days. Get ready for TI9A Cocos Island should be QRV by Superbowl Sunday. 5H4 in Tanzania will be QRV 2/04 by a group Italians and again by a group of OK hams on 2/6. South Orkney VP8PJ should be on the air by 2/20.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting. Our presentation will be by Bob Wilson N6TV on everything you need to know about USB and serial interfaces.



Mount Tamalpais viewed from Tamalpais High School 1922. Courtesy of the estate of Bud Beals. Mill Valley represents, I guess, the South end of the Redwood Empire.

## SDRplay Receiver - a easy way to get a waterfall! by Doug WW6D

As many of you know, the SDRplay receivers are commonly seen in the advertising of the various magazines. The reason they have become so popular is that they are so inexpensive relative to the price of an equivalent SDR of just a few years ago. You can now purchase their top of the line receiver, the RSPduo for \$239.95 at HRO:



RSPdx 199.95 at HRO

or their "entry level" RSP1A at \$119.95:



An equivalent SDR in 2012 was in the \$1000 range. The price may seem low to you for a 14-bit SDR covering 1kHz to 2 GHz (yes, through the low microwave bands) but it is real - and these receivers have real performance including front end preselection filters, the ability to see up to 10 MHz at one time, and software selection of the various modes (USB, LSB, CW, FM etc). It is powered by the USB connection.

After you choose a receiver, on receipt it is recommended that you go straight to the SDRplay.com website. There you can choose your computer platform (Windows, macOS, Linux, Raspberry Pi etc). Then, download the software you need for your receiver. Follow the instructions on the website with close attention to when (and when to not) connect your receiver. Then try out the features by connecting your antenna and practice using the software so you can get used to it.

In addition to being a wonderful station receiver, it does remarkably well as your AM/FM radio should you desire that. It supports stereo on the broadcast FM band and the audio is dependent solely on the sound system in the computer you are using.

You could also turn your SDRplay into a waterfall display in conjunction with your home transceiver. There are various ways of doing this; the SDRplay website even has Application Notes, one specifically entitled "Using the RSP Radio Spectrum Processor with your Transceiver as a Panadapter".

So, before you run out and buy the latest-and-greatest transceiver, consider an SDRplay SDR as an inexpensive upgrade to your station.



**Some thoughts on Ham spirit from Jock Elliot, KB2GOM reprinted from QST, June 1994 and suggested by Fred, N6YEU**

"Sitting 'Round the Global Campfire"

As the son of a professional soldier, later turned itinerant teacher, I've seen enough packing crates and moving boxes to last me a lifetime. A medley of new schools, new friends and new locales was interesting as a child, but it has underscored my need as an adult for deep roots and stability.

Yet, at odd times, my contented life as husband, father, and high-tech publicist is occasionally punctuated by vagabond cravings. Without warning, ancient wanderer genes kick in, triggering an itch to travel beyond the horizon, to share a campfire in some exotic place, to swap stories with other carefree spirits. Still, there's nothing I treasure more than an evening with my family by the familiar hearth.

Ambiguity reigns supreme: I'm a nomad who wants to be home in time for dinner, an adventurer who'd rather not stray far from the armchair.

Radio has come to my rescue. It lets me wander the globe at will from the cottage on Pickering Lane. My family can even share the adventure if they want.

For the broad view, international broadcasting is perfect: I can hear the news from across the oceans--direct, without the interference of stateside news analysts--- virtually any time I want. BBC, Radio France International, Deutsche Welle, Radio China International, Radio Havana Cuba: I have my choice of languages, cultures, perspectives and correspondents. I can sample the smorgasbord of world events from any angle I choose.

Yet, good as it is, international broadcasting has one major limitation ---- as a listen-only medium, it lacks the personal touch. I can't interact with the person on the other side of the microphone. Fortunately, there's Amateur Radio.

With a few yards of aluminum tubing, a modest investment in electronic gear and enough electricity to power a bright reading lamp, I can set off on the Great Adventure on my own. I key the Mike, call CQ and launch into the unknown. There's no telling where my signal will be heard or who will hear it. When another ham returns my call, or when I respond to a signal, it could be from down the street, across the continent or half a world away.

We're like traders on an ancient caravan route, not knowing what chance encounter may take place at the next watering hole. Nomads of the airwaves, vagabonds of the ether, we travel light--- all we have to offer others is our call sign, a signal report and what we might reveal of ourselves. We meet on the airwaves and gather at the global campfire. We can choose to tarry by the fire and swap yarns, or we can give the radio amateur's version of a nod of acknowledgement. But whatever the exchange, the currency has been a moment of mutual understanding and connectedness.

I savor the different accents I hear on the air. Often I try to picture the person I am talking to and what his or her physical environment is like. Sometime I look in an atlas to try to get a better idea. Having swapped pictures a time or two with other hams, I find my imaginings are almost always wrong, but the exercise is fun nonetheless.

Despite the efforts of the ARRL to cloak radio in rational scientific explanation, the truth is deeper: Radio is almost magical in the way it affords us the opportunity to communicate with people we would probably not otherwise meet. I used to believe that contesting and rapid-fire DXing were a supreme waste of the power of Amateur Radio, but I've changed my thinking. When a contact takes place whether it's a long conversation or a quick swapping of signal reports, whether the signals are booming or so difficult to copy that it requires infinite pa-

tience just to exchange call signs,in that instant,we enlarge the circle at the global campfire.

In his excellent memoir, Phillip Caputo relates a tradition of the desert nomads of North Africa. The wanderers of the desert hold that the hospitality of the campfire is sacrosanct. No matter what bitter enemies you might be,if you ride up and claim the hospitality of the campfire,the keeper of the fire is obliged to grant it to you. And you, in turn,are obliged to visit no ill upon your host---you are an honored guest at the fire. When you meet again, you may choose to do each other in, but not when the hospitality of the fire has been claimed and granted.

I think this is a tradition that should be honored in ham radio. When we fellow Gypsies of the airwaves meet at the global campfire, through long-haul DX or the local repeater, we should treat each other as honored guests, regardless of license class, irrespective of previous radio background.

In listening around the bands,it seems that most hams behave that way, treating each other with extraordinary courtesy. A few however,do not,and I think it hurts all of us. So,when we meet again on the air,I hope we will offer each other the hospitality of the campfire and extend it to all others. Look for me, I'll be the one in the armchair.....

By Jock Elliott- KB2GOM. QST June ,1994)



## JANUARY MEETING MINUTES

by Doug WW6D, Secretary

President Jim Selmi, K6JS, called the meeting to order at 7:57 pm, January 8, 2020 at the Boulevard Cafe, Petaluma, CA. In attendance were 22 members and guests.

Minutes from the December meeting, as published in Sunspots, were seconded and approved. Treasurer's report was presented by outgoing Treasurer Bill Zaner, W6IYS. His report was also seconded and approved.

Old Business. Following up from last month, Jim noted that an official election had not occurred last year. After some discussion, he proposed a vote by acclamation of the following officers and directors:

President: Jim Selmi, K6JS  
Vice President: Roger Cooper, N3RC  
Secretary: Doug Bender, WW6D  
Treasurer: Fred Leoni, N6YEU  
Director: Josh Fiden, W6XU  
Director: Bob Magnani, K6QXY  
Director (Past President): Bill Sirvatka, WX6B

It was seconded and approved by the membership.

New Business. Jim K6JS reported that Robert "TV Bob" Wilson, N6TV will be the speaker next month, topic to be announced later.

Program: Solar Cycle and HF Propagation Update was presented by Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA. He gave a brief update on Cycle 24, what to expect propagation-wise during the current solar minimum, and reviewed the predictions for Cycle 25. Notable take-away from the presentation was that the solar flux (10.7 cm) index is being predicted to go below 60 in the coming years ahead, which has never occurred since the solar flux readings have been recorded. This is leading to the conclusion that Cycle 25 will be similar to Cycle 24 in that there will be a long minimum and not a significant period of solar maximum.

Adjourned at 8:52 pm.

## REDXA Calendar of Upcoming Events

by Doug WW6D

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*Feb 12 \* REDXA Monthly Meeting*

**Feb 15-16 ARRL Intl DX Contest, CW**

**Feb 29- Mar 1 North American QSO Party, RTTY**

*Mar 11 \* REDXA Monthly Meeting*

**Mar 28-29 CQ WW WPX SSB**

*Apr 8 \* REDXA Monthly Meeting*

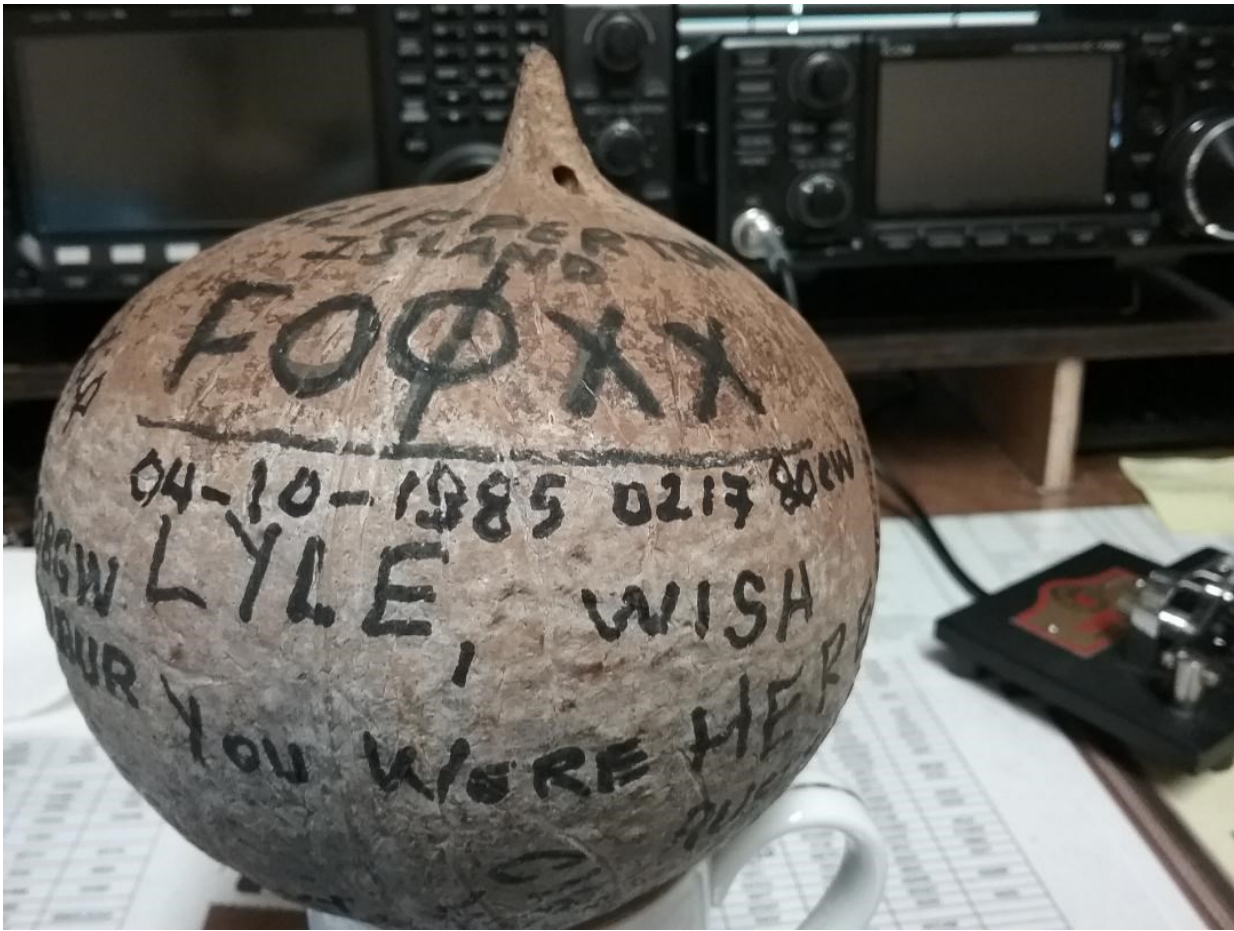
**Apr 23-26 Visalia Int'l DX Convention**

*May 13 \* REDXA Monthly Meeting*

**May 30-31 CQ WW WPX CW**

Refer to <https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestcal.html> for more contest information





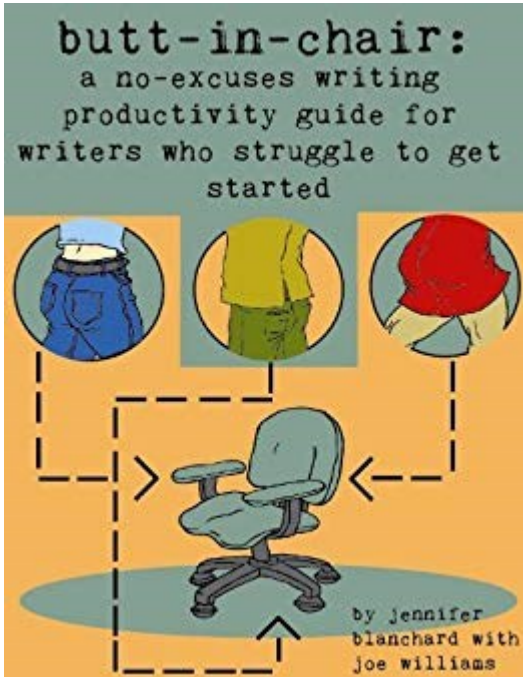
**Above:** A valid QSL from the FO0XX DXpedition of 1985 for Lyle, W6WF. Lyle now lives in Carmel, but he is a charter member of REDXA. Lyle writes "In 1984 I went with the Clipperton Crew on an attempted DXpedition to Clipperton Island...We made it to Mexico but our charter boat took our funds and ran. IN 1985 the crew made another successful trip, but [at the time] my mother-in-law developed terminal cancer and I stayed behind." The coconut QSL was a gift to Lyle from the expedition Crew. Members of the crew were W6SZN, W6OAT, W6RGG, N7NG, KK6X, FO8HL, DJ9ZB, N6GJ T12LF, F9LX, K3NA, F8GW, W8TN, F6GX (ZL3B(ZL3CW), WA7NIN, XE1ZZA, and JG3LZG.



**Left:**The 3D2C Conway Reef expedition of 2012 landing on the reef. Hrane, YT1AD, the expedition leader is standing with his camera in hand. Your editor was the expedition physician.

Credit N6PSE





# Butt-in-Chair Revisited

A frequent word of advice to aspiring writers is that they should spend more time with their butts in a chair. This same advice is popular in the ham radio contesting community. If one wants to win a contest or get a higher score, he or she needs to spend more time seated in front of their radio. There's no denying that this practice can help with writer's block and also increase one's chances of logging a sweep in Sweepstakes. But prolonged periods of sitting also have their downside.

Prolonged sitting is a health hazard. Some writers have advanced the idea that "sitting is the new smoking". That observation is hotly debated among epidemiologists, but no one argues that too much sitting is not good for you. Prolonged sitting is associated with high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, and high cholesterol. Some studies have suggested that prolonged sitting increases the risk of both heart disease and cancer.

Fortunately, other studies have shown that an hour a day of physical activity can counteract the negative effect of too much butt-in-chair.

Your editor recently had the effects of prolonged sitting brought home. After spending a weekend in a chair with the ARRL's RTTY Roundup, I followed the next weekend with ten more hours of chair time for the North American QSO party. And the next day, I was sick.

I will spare you the details of my symptoms, but the diagnosis became clear: I was suffering from acute prostatitis. I was so miserable that I went to the emergency room and followed up the next day with a visit to a urologist.

"Why," I asked the doctor, "is this happening to me?" The short answer was that I'm 75 years old and male. "Do you think that may have been triggered by too much sitting?" I asked. "Oh yes", said the urologist, "I see it all the time. I don't have much experience with Ham Radio, but I do see it with men who have recently been on long flights."

I look forward to the next major contest with some trepidation.



# \$\$\$ Money Matters \$\$\$

If you haven't paid your 2020 dues, do it now!  
Note that Fred, N6YEU, is our new treasurer. A big thank you for stepping up, Fred.

REDXA and MARS have secured the Marin Rod and Gun Club site for Field Day 2020. The Rod & Gun Club billed the clubs \$975. It seems to me (ed.) that for an activity that has a large public service component we shouldn't have to pay that much, but until we find a comparable venue, that's the way it goes. We'll be sharing part of Saturday afternoon with a wedding in the clubhouse. Maybe we should check out the *hors d'oeuvres*.

You may have noticed that the HRO ad is no longer appearing in "Sunspots". The copy hasn't changed for a few years and, as far as can be determined, HRO is not paying for the service. NCCC continues to run an HRO ad and receives a small annual payment. We will be investigating what needs to be done to be done to reactivate the feature.

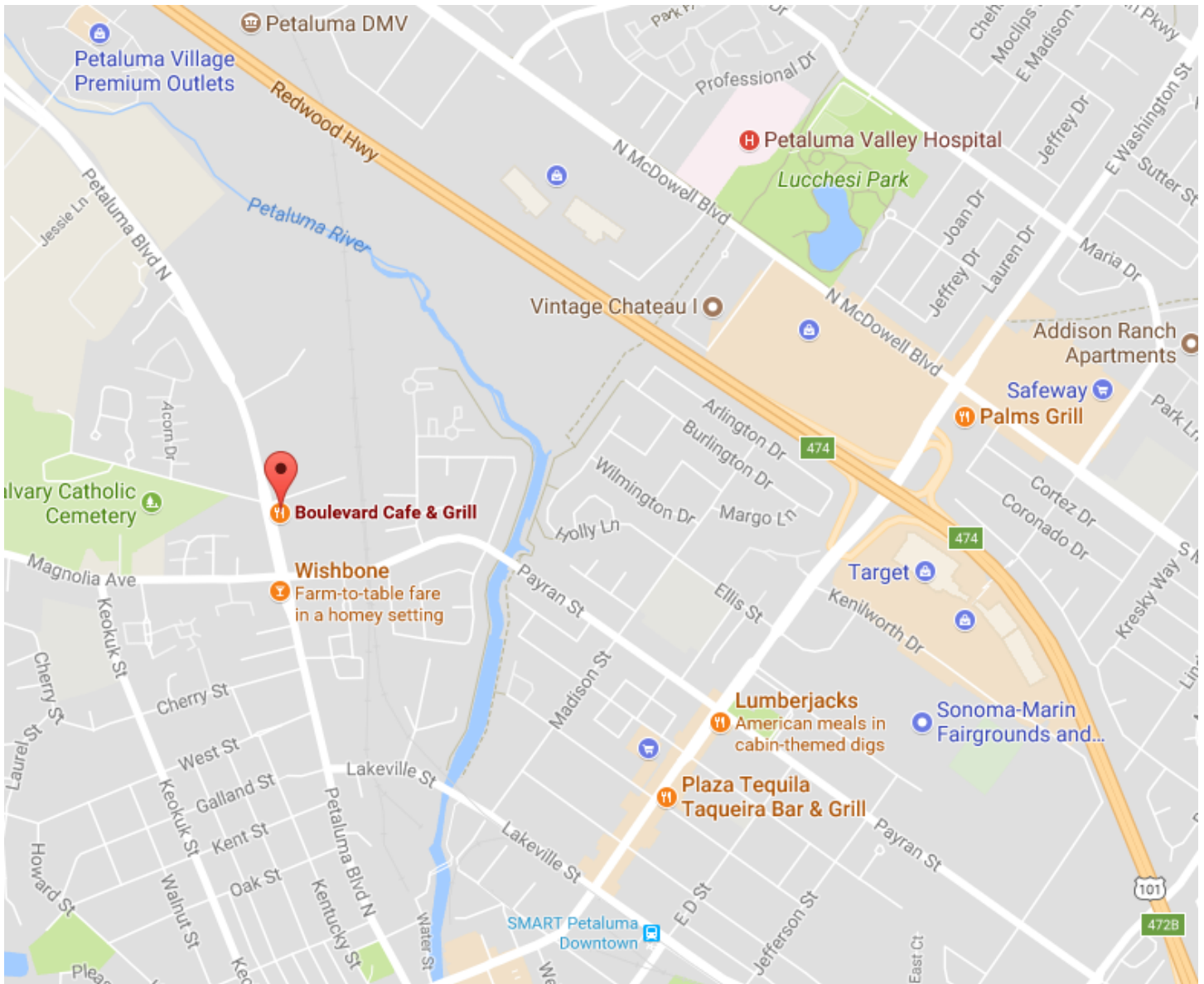




# Boulevard Café & Grill



1096 Petaluma  
Blvd. North, Petaluma,



Redwood Empire DX Association meets the second Wednesday of each months at the Boulevard Café and Grill at 1096 Petaluma Blvd. North. Petaluma, CA.