

Noise Floor

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Pacific Northwest VHF Society

Winter 2006

2005 Conference Recap

Despite the huge spike in fuel prices just before the 2005 Pacific Northwest VHF Conference in Seaside, Oregon, 65 people attended. Many brought their families for an extended weekend on the Oregon Coast. Several people came to the event as non-PNWVHFS members and signed up on the spot. Welcome aboard!

The Friday evening "Pizza Bash" was very well attended with at least 85 VHFers, friends and family members packed into the Pizza Harbor Restaurant. Nobody got an exact count because the crowd was constantly in motion. Operating awards were presented by PNWVHFS Awards Chairman, and Western Washington Director, Eric Olsen (N7EPD).



Photo by W7DHC

Kicking off the Saturday conference session was keynote speaker and QST Magazine's "World Above 50 MHz" editor Gene Zimmerman (W3ZZ). In his presentation, Gene provided an excellent overview of the various propagation modes encountered in VHF+ activity and gave examples of how each worked.

Another featured speaker was Eric Swartz (WA6HHQ), one of the founders of Elecraft Corporation which manufactures and sells those nice K1 and K2 transceiver and associated transverter kits. Eric traced the design philosophy used in creating the excellent receiver in the K2 and the 50, 144 and 222 MHz transverter kits. He also announced that the long-awaited 432 MHz transverter kit would soon be available for purchase.

Several other speakers provided technical programs ranging from EME on 10-47 GHz, VUCC award tips, a simple transverter switch design and 10 GHz experimentation in the Pacific Northwest.

Continued on Page Three

Newsflash!

2006 conference will be in Bellingham, Washington

You heard it here first! The 2006 Pacific Northwest VHF+ Conference will be held in Fox Hall at the Hampton Inn in Bellingham, Washington, on the weekend of September 29-October 1, 2006.

After a long search, it was apparent that hotels in the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett area were either not interested in or not capable of hosting the conference. Price was a major obstacle, with meeting facility rental costs well beyond what the society could afford if conference registration costs were to remain reasonable. The search area was then broadened to other areas of Western Washington and the Bellingham location was found.

In addition to offering an excellent meeting facility and high-quality hotel at reasonable room rates, the Bellingham location offers some great family-oriented activities for those who wish to extend the conference weekend into a vacation. Bellingham and the surrounding communities offer many fun and interesting adventures, and beautiful British Columbia, Canada, is just 20 minutes away.

The contract for Fox Hall was signed in January 16, 2006, locking up the space. The Hampton Inn has set aside a block of 35 rooms at a special conference rate of \$79 single occupancy, \$84 double occupancy. This includes a hot breakfast, free high-speed Internet service

Continued on Page Three

FROM THE PRESIDENT

LYNN BURLINGAME (N7CFO)

The 2005 conference was quite a success, and once again, we had national level speakers. We began working on the conference a week after the 2004 conference, and all of the preparation really paid off. The Shilo Inn was a great host, and a lot of families turned out.



Photo by Missy Imel

Kevin Imel (KF7CN) 2005 VHFer of the Year

Kevin Imel (KF7CN) was honored at the 2005 Pacific Northwest VHF+ Conference for his tireless efforts to create and maintain the society's web site and e-mail reflector. Kevin was unable to attend the conference to accept the award in person, so society President Lynn Burlingame (N7CFO) accepted it on his behalf.

The conference was a real team effort, and we owe special thanks to our proceedings coordinator, Scott Honaker (N7SS), our security man (and all-around problem solver) Art Tanaka (N7CC) and the door prize coordinator Rich Commo (K7LOG). We are already busily at work on the 2006 conference as you can see from the article on the front page. Getting a date and location pinned down early is a key to getting ARRL sanction for the conference.

2005 has been a busy year for the society and we have accomplished a lot. First and foremost was the completion of a major revision of the constitution and bylaws. There were a number of problems with the old documents that made it impossible to legally conduct business. An example is the approval needed for creating the vice president position during the 2004 annual meeting. Since we didn't have a legal quorum at that meeting, this was an invalid decision. Don't forget that we are a registered non-profit organization with the State of Washington and there are regulations that we have to abide by.

While we were at it, we re-defined the duties of officers and appointees. This clarified a lot of issues and will ensure that everyone knows what they are supposed to be doing.

At the 2004 meeting, I stated that we were at the end of our growth period. How wrong I was! We had about 265 members at that time. We currently are 309 strong and continuing to grow. It is also interesting to note that we have picked up a lot of new members in the outlying areas.

Another item of note is the increased activity in Alaska. Ed Cole (KL7UW) apparently got tired of having nobody to talk to and has recruited quite a bunch of hams into VHF+ activities in the Cook Inlet area. Some of them have joined the PNWVHFS and I am hoping that band conditions will allow us to talk to them one of these days.

This brings up a matter that several members have asked about – the boundaries of the PNWVHFS. When we were established we settled on British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and Idaho as a manageable area and one that was not represented by a VHF society. Each RAC/ARRL section was allocated a director to represent local interests. Changing this structure would require constitutional amendments and there is no compelling reason to do so at this time. It is, however, in our best

Continued on Page Five

2005 conference recap...

Continued from Page One

Electronic versions of the presentations, plus additional white papers, were made available to attendees on the very nice Proceedings CD sponsored by Icom (they paid all production costs) and edited by Scott Honaker (N7SS). Copies of both the 2005 and 2004 Proceedings CDs are still available at a cost, including postage, of \$5.00 for shipment to US addresses, \$5.50 to Canada and \$6.00 elsewhere. Contact Lynn Burlingame (N7CFO) to order a copy of either one.

The society annual meeting followed the technical sessions, highlighted by the announcement that Kevin Imel (KF7CN), had been named 2005 "VHFer of the Year" for his tireless efforts to promote the society via the web site and PNWVHFS e-mail reflector. Kevin had established the PNWVHFS e-mail reflector prior to the formation of the society in 2001 and immediately offered its use as an information exchange resource for the regional organization. Subsequently, he also created and has maintained the PNWVHFS web site. Both venues have been instrumental in bringing the membership together despite the broad expanse of the Pacific Northwest region.

Following the annual meeting, door prize coordinator Rick Commo (K7LOG), conducted the prize drawing. This year's door prize list was extensive, capped by an Icom IC-910H and matching power supply donated by Icom North America. The lucky winner of the top prize was Jim Hamlin (W7FKI). The grin on his face told the whole story!

Saturday evening, attendees gathered in the Shilo Inn dining room for a no-host dinner and lots of conversation. On Sunday morning, 35-40 attendees gathered in the hotel dining room for a "Farewell Breakfast" and one final opportunity for conversation.



N7ZLM/SK

Tom McPherson (N7ZLM) of Mt. Vernon, Washington, passed away after a brief illness on December 31, 2005. He was the society's 300th member. He will be missed by many.

Lead-based solder being phased out

If you've tried to buy lead-based electronic solder lately, you may have found it in short supply. The reason? Lead-based solder is starting to be phased out due to environmental concerns. The electronics industry worldwide is being required by new environmental regulations to move fairly quickly to "lead-free" solder.

Lead-free solder is already going mainstream in Europe where electronics products using lead-based solder reportedly cannot be sold after mid-2006. That's not far off.

While lead is certainly a hazardous metal and the move to get it out of the mainstream is likely a good idea, doing so poses more than a few problems. Lead-tin alloy solders melt at about 183°F while the lead-free replacements melt at 215°F and higher. The higher melting temperature stresses sensitive components and makes replacing them more difficult. Also, at least some of the new lead-free solders do not mix well with older lead-tin alloy solder, further complicating repair work.

The leading contender to replace the traditional lead-tin alloy solder is one made with tin, silver and copper. It melts at approximately 218°F. Other possible replacements include small amounts of gold and/or Santimony with the tin, silver and/or copper. One other

Continued on Page Five

2006 Conference in Bellingham...

Continued from Page One

in all rooms, free coffee all day in the lobby and fresh-baked cookies every afternoon.

Reservations can be made at the Hampton Inn-Bellingham Airport, beginning right now, by calling (800) HAMPTON/(800 426-7866) and asking for the Bellingham, Washington, location. The three-digit code to get the special conference rate is "VHF." Be sure to give the reservation operator this code as it not only guarantees that you get the conference rate, but it also allows the hotel to track the number of reservations made in the block so that more rooms can be added, if needed.

Stay tuned! Watch the society web site at www.pnwvhfs.org for more information on the conference as it becomes available

2005 PNWVHFS Conference Photos



Eric Swartz (WA6HHQ) explains receiver design



Conference attendees at the Saturday evening dinner.



W7FKI with his new rig, won at the drawing.



Gene Zimmerman (W3ZZ) talks about propagation.

All photos on this page by N7CFO

From the President...

Continued from Page Two

interest to support the activity in Alaska. Society membership is available to all, regardless of their location.

I have appointed Scott Honaker (N7SS) as the society speaker coordinator. If you know of a club or organization that needs a program for a their meeting or hamfair, he is the “go to” guy. Likewise, if you are interested in putting on presentations, please contact him at n7ss@arrl.org. Scott has made or coordinated several presentations in the last six months, and each of them has resulted in new society members and increased VHF/UHF activity in the immediate area.

The Sunday and Tuesday 2M and 23CM nets are going great under Fred (WA7TZY) and Susan (WB7BST) Tewlewski’s leadership. Ray Cannon (W7GLF) has recently picked up the Sunday 2M net. These are fun nets, and give you a chance to check out your gear, evaluate propagation and chew the rag. I encourage you to check in and be counted on these nets, especially if you are in a remote area.

As for the future, we have a lot to do. As always, we need to stimulate activities in areas other than Western Washington. It is easy to set up these activities, and the society reflector is the ideal way to do so. If you have some new gear that you want to try out, make a posting to the reflector announcing the frequency and head for high ground – that is all there is to it! Likewise, the Poodle Dog, Frankie Doodles and Scappoose breakfasts are well attended and a lot of fun. There are no ‘rules’ here - all it takes is finding a location that has lots of coffee and announcing when you are going to be there for breakfast. We need to get some of these events going in BC, eastern Oregon and the North Sound areas, so if you know a good spot, why not give it a try?

Noise Floor is the official publication of the Pacific Northwest VHF Society. All opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors unless specifically stated as being otherwise.

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Solder...

Continued from Page Three

possible replacement is a tin-bismuth alloy that melts at a low 138°F, but it does not work well with some metals. There is even some experimentation going on with conductive epoxy glues. (Can you imagine replacing a glued in component? – Editor)

Stay tuned on this one. It will probably jump out of the woodwork pretty soon.