

# Loose Gravel

Newsletter of ROADs

Volume 2, Number 1

AB7X~Editor

Hello all...I trust that your holiday gatherings and preparations were enjoyable, warm and loving, and that all of you remained in a healthy state of mind and body! Welcome to 2006 and all that this new year holds for us. It would appear that the weather pattern of last month graced the Willamette Valley with not so much of the grid outages and difficulties associated with extreme cold and icy conditions as we had a couple years ago, however...we still have Winter upon us and I recommend none of us relax our position of preparedness. All the usual precautions apply, such as emergency supplies of water and food, fuel for the portable heaters, lanterns and generators, and charged batteries for our radio stations. In a 'normal' grid outage, we can expect to be without electricity for a few hours or half a day, but in the 'worst case scenario', we may be looking at a week of days or more without the magic of the light switch and thermostat at our fingertips. Something to think about on the way to the refrigerator, eh? Test your equipment periodically; make sure that your reserves are in good working condition. Peace of mind is a good thing.

I do seriously hope that this year will bring relief to those who suffered the worst in 2005 from tsunami, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, volcano, flood and all the associated effects thereof. No one can be fully prepared for any or all the events mentioned above, but thinking that "It can't happen here!" is sheer folly and a little extra precaution is of necessity. This is not meant to bore any one of my readers, but I DO intend to remind you often that we here in Western Oregon are NOT immune from naturally-occurring disasters, that is not a matter of IF they will occur, and it is just a matter of WHEN and WHERE.

On a lighter note, on Christmas Eve Shadow excitedly told me to come see something at our kitchen window, and after locating our digital camera I took this photo...



Turning to the West, I saw this image in the last of the sunset...



At first, I thought it to be a special type of auroral display given to my son and I on Christmas Eve, but it was just the usual spectacular panorama of a not-too-unusual Western Oregon sky we are blessed with here in Coyóteville.

Here we have an offering from Bob, K7QXG, current President of the local 'Good Sam' club...

....

I am one of those who have been working on my antenna system despite the weather, and have been assisted by my loyal friend Trent, W7TDN. Let me give you a brief summary of what we did, since I cannot attend the meeting tonight.

I had a Cushcraft vertical (MA-5V), which is not really a full size vertical. Results on 20 and 15 meters were marginal. I refer to it as my "wimpy" vertical. I decided to replace it with a bigger vertical... the Butternut HF-6V, which also covers 40 meters

and uses full size radials instead of the little 4-foot long wire "spokes" that the Cushcraft uses.

A little research led me to see an opportunity to feed the two verticals in phase, which would generate a lobe in a single direction that would have about 5 db gain over a single vertical. After much math, testing, and cutting and pruning, Trent and I moved the "wimpy" vertical to a position 35 feet away (10 inches too far, but I had no choice), and then replaced it with the big Butternut.

A coax "T" was inserted at a point in the feed line system that had been determined, using math and formulas, to create phased vertical system with the lobe to the East. A test was then run with KK7UU in Salem.

All my work was for naught! It turned out that the signal to the East (Salem) was 5 db weaker than the Big Butternut by itself! Ah, despair followed. Now I feed the verticals individually.

I now have everything set up so that I can use my remote switch to choose between the wimpy vertical or the big vertical. Of interest, on receive; the signals are a full 2 "S" units stronger on the HF-6V than on the Cushcraft MA-5V. That is true on 20, 15, and 10 meters (signals from West Coast to East Coast and DX stations). I have left the wimpy vertical up for now, but it will be replaced later with my home brew 20-meter wire Delta Loop, which I have previously tested and used.

The HF-6V does quite well on 40 meters, and I have found it loads very nicely on 80 meters using my roller inductor tuner. I have noticed an anomaly though - it receives far more stations than I am able to work, i.e., in a recent test on 10 meters, I was able to copy 14 stations, but only 8 could copy me! Not good.

And then there is the really big vertical at the edge of my back

yard - the Butternut HF-2V for 40 and 80 meters. It looms impressively skyward, and packs a wallop on 80 meters, but does not do as well on 40 as the HF-6V! Of course it is ground mounted, but does deploy full size radials for 80 and for 40 meter bands.

Vertical antennas are not my first choice. When I lived in Aloha, near Beaverton, for 34 years, I had a tower with two stacked beams... a mono-bander on 10 and a BIG mono-bander for 15 meters. I also used a small amplifier and would only need to call CQ on 15 meter CW but once, and then I would sit back and work the Europe pileup for 2 to 3 hours... and never call CQ again. That was in 1991 and 1992. I love those days

Today, my small city lot does not afford me the room or legal ability to put up another system like that one, so I must use what I can. I still prefer the wire Delta Loop over the verticals, except for distant DX. I have worked 304 countries and have 294 confirmed, so using a vertical is a necessity if I am ever to get to 300 countries confirmed.

I truly appreciate all the help Trent has given me. One day we spent 2 hours hoisting the big vertical up and down repeatedly to tune it... and it was a chore. It still needs serious adjustment on 20 and 30 meters, but I'll need a 30 foot extension ladder to do it.

....

73,

Bob  
K7QXG, Bob Peschka  
Dallas, Oregon, USA  
Extra Class. Licensed 1961.  
Web Site: <http://www.dsl-only.net/~k7qyg>

Thank you Bob! We hope to hear more from Bob at this month's regular meeting, this week on the 12<sup>th</sup>, where he will be officiating

over a most important event.....it will be all about Mentoring, and learning about programming those pesky little hand-held (and mobiles, if you want to bring a stubborn one along) radios that seem to be the perennial culprit of not being able to access repeaters or go to the right simplex frequency. "Do we program according to frequency, or by Alpha-numeric, and what exactly IS that 'PMS' button anyway?". All the questions you were afraid to ask can be aired at the meeting, and there will be a select group of experienced operators available and ready to answer them. We need your participation to make our meeting a success....so please plan to attend this Thursday evening.

[Dave, KD7VLP, has a couple of items for us here..the first being a transcription of an article from the Itemizer-Observer concerning a Field Day from 35 years ago.](#)

## POLK RADIO AMATEURS HOLD FIELD PRACTICE

During the past weekend the Polk County Amateur Radio Club participated in the world's largest test of a non-commercial emergency communication facility. The county-wide group set up their two-way shortwave radio gear, antennas, storage batteries, portable batteries and tents in the Sheridan area for the annual test known as "Field Day". The event marked the closing exercise of Amateur Radio Week.

Field Day combined the serious preparations for an emergency, with the fun of a campout and the excitement of a contest.

The group operated their field equipment for a 27 -hour period.

The activity not only gave the hams an opportunity to test their equipment and operating skills, but also provided practice in the operation from a field site. They learn to operate without the reliance on commercial electrical power as they would in time of an emergency through such an exercise.

Such practice pays off when radio amateurs respond to a communications crisis during the hurricane season, when ice storms hit, or when a tornado strikes. In such emergencies hams set up their gear quickly and efficiently whenever necessary and handle messages for the police, civil defense, Red Cross and other relief organizations as long as necessary.

During this test, over 350 contacts were handled. Those participating in the event included Shel Phillips, Sheridan; George Toews, Dallas; Larry Lilyquist, Salem; Chuck Kummer, Independence; and Bill Harris, West Salem.

Weather conditions were reported as "not the best" for the event, with cold weather prevailing for most of the night.

There are nearly one million amateur radio operators who perform a service defined in international law as one of self-training, intercommunication and technical investigations carried out by duly authorized persons in radio technique solely with a personal aim and without pecuniary interest. The hobby not only serves for personal gain, but for public service as well.

=====  
ITEMIZER-OBSERVER  
July 1, 1971

[The next item is an account of Dave's personal experience with one of his backyard denizens.....with photo following.](#)

"The second is a .JPG of a squirrel who would have been a serious candidate for a Darwin Award if I were not as nice as I am. He/she had figured out how to take off the cap of a sunflower seed tube feeder and then proceeded to eat its way down to the point where he/she could not get out. I took the feeder down from the cable and attempted to pull the idiot out by his tail. I was hoping to get it out enough where it could get some purchase with its claws and be able to back out on its own power. It just growled at me and pushed further into the tube. Bet you did not know squirrels could

growl...I didn't. We had to leave for the afternoon so I placed the feeder horizontally on the ground so maybe he/she might be able to get out. No luck...he/she was still there that night and I had to tear apart the feeder to free the stupid squirrel."

"STUPID SQUIRREL!"



As an additional note, the surviving coal miner, Randal L. McCloy Jr., is a HAM who could probably use all the support he can get at this time! Those of you who are so inclined can send him get well QSL cards to:

[Randal L. McCloy Jr. KC8VKZ](#)

[PO BOX 223](#)

[Philippi, WV 26435](#)

I know that I would like to hear from people if I were in his place....please get a card off to him, and tell any of your friends to do the same if they wish.

Chris, AD7GT, has offered an interesting bio-log of his road trip to Reno and back in December, ENJOY!

How I spent My Winter Vacation

and

How I Got in to Ham Radio

Well, this story starts out with my other addiction/hobby, "performance car rally", or "stage rally". We close off roads, usually unpaved here in the US, and send cars down them one at a time, to race against the clock, rather than wheel to wheel. There are "special stages", which are timed, and driven as fast as your courage will allow you to go, and then there are "transits", where one is obliged to maintain the speed limit and all traffic regulations. Whoever completes the whole course with the shortest elapsed time wins.

I got involved in rally in 1995. The newspaper I worked for had a small story about an all night gravel road rally (TSD, or time/speed/distance style) that was being held between McMinnville, Grand Ronde and the coast. My partner, Adelaide, and I had always wanted to try a rally, so here was our chance. This style of event, although completely maintaining the speed limit, was patterned very much after a stage rally as to format and route instructions. It also introduced me to the rally community, as committed a bunch of nuts as you will ever meet. Interestingly, many of the rally organizers and volunteers were also amateur radio operators: they kept the event safe and handled scoring traffic from the checkpoints.

Needless to say, Adelaide and I were hooked. We were dead last but finished, a mere two and a half hours late. We chased

all manner of wildlife up and down gravel roads. We made a porcupine very cranky, passing him twice while we were lost. A coyote paced us down the road for a while. I don't know how many deer and rabbits we saw. I don't recommend events of this style to novices, but it's a great test of one's fortitude and relationship with whoever is in the car with you.

All rally events have both the driver and co-driver or navigator. You don't get to practice the route, or even get to see the route instructions, prior to the event. Stage rally events in other parts of the world allow "recce" or reconnaissance so you can make your own notes, but here in the US, we run what are called "blind" rallies. It tends to keep the speeds down. In any case, the co-driver or navigator keeps the crew on course and on time, whether it is a TSD event, or a full-blown stage rally.

Adelaide and I ran a few more TSD style events, and found out about stage rally events running in Washington state, west of Olympia. We went up in February 1996 with the intention of just being spectators, but got hooked up with rally volunteers from Oregon and ended up being road marshalls, guarding a side road against civilian traffic, while the stage was "hot" and the rally cars were running.

One thing led to another, and we got progressively more involved as rally volunteers. By 1997, I was acting as a "stage captain", responsible for the crew of volunteers working one timed section of the rally. Up until now, we had been using CB's for communications between most of the volunteers, with just a couple of hams for each stage crew for longer-range communications. It was becoming obvious that even with a scanner and a CB, it was a hassle (particularly for them dragging our ham friends through the woods at our usual breakneck pace.

In 1998, I was asked to be chief of controls for our local event, The Oregon Trail Rally. Part of doing that job meant that I had to be in constant contact with the organizers of the event, and

that meant ham radio. So, I buckled down, bought the "Now You're Talking" book, visited the ARRL web site and found the local Volunteer Examiner crew in Salem. I passed the Technician with no problems on my first try in March 1998. It took Adelaide a couple more tries, as she was not as technically inclined, but she got her license by that summer.

Fast-forward seven years. I've upgraded from Tech to General, then to Extra late last summer. (Memo to hams: don't change your callsign right before an event when folks are looking to you for contact information. It is amazing how much of your identity gets wrapped up in your callsign.) Yes, I'm an Extra Lite. I couldn't do 5 words a minute right now if my life depended on it. I'll get myself to a reasonable pace with Morse Code some day, but it's not a priority at the moment. I've been tagged with being the county Emergency Coordinator for the ARES unit. That's a whole 'nother story.

So I finally get to the story of this December's road trip. Reno has had a long tradition of desert racing and stage rally, but the rally community there has been in decline since the mid-1980's, when the manufacturers withdrew support for rally in the US. Folks from Oregon, Washington and California (as well as the rest of the country) have been trying to "bootstrap" events and the community for several years. This year, there was going to be a small regional event and the Reno organizers were looking for volunteers. I didn't have anything on the calendar for early December, when the event was scheduled, so I threw my name in to the hat, telling the organizers I'd prefer to be a radio operator rather than working at one of the control points (I'm terrible at doing the time arithmetic when there are four or five cars stacked in the checkpoint and everyone is in a hurry to get to the service area).

The trip down was a little interesting. I sort of grew up in Medford, when I wasn't in Salem, in the Sixties and Seventies. Medford has about tripled in population since I was a kid in

grade school. I stayed overnight at the north end of town, where they were rebuilding the interchange again. I could recognize the street names, but there were no landmarks left that I could recognize, it had all been torn down and rebuilt a couple of times in the last thirty-five years. Man, does that make you feel old. The run over Siskiyou Summit wasn't too bad, just a little fog and slush. Turning left at Weed and heading down through Susanville, the weather was blue skies all the way.

When I got to Reno, it turned out they didn't have a co-driver for the Pace (or Car 0). Now, Car 0 has to have a ham, to let the organizers know that the course is clear, literally. Car 0 drives the course at about three quarters of "race pace", trying to note any problems in the route instructions, or last minute obstacles that the organizers might have overlooked. So the co-driver has to operate a radio, read instructions to the driver, keep track of the rally odometer (which reads down to hundredth's of a mile), clicking off instructions and checking mileages, the location of numbered arrows on stakes as we drive by, and other assorted tasks like keeping an eye on the gauges.

Did I mention that this was the first time I had done this job? Been strapped in to a car with a full roll cage, five point harnesses and a helmet? Now, I can operate the radio, it's just a basic ICOM two-meter rig, not too complicated. I can read a route book, most of the time. I'd never seen this brand of rally odo before, and it didn't come with a manual. Figuring out how to get in and out of the car with the helmet on and getting around the roll cage took a bit of practice, as did hooking up the five-point harness. The good news is: I'm not at all prone to motion sickness, which attacks many co-drivers, having to shift point of focus between route book, odometer and passing arrow/number stakes.

It was an entertaining weekend. My driver was one of the organizer's sons, a strapping lad of twenty-five or so, just barely getting the edge off his testosterone poisoning. He had

enough sense to remember that we had no service crew, and that if we broke something it was a long walk back to town (we were actually racing near Gerlach, 110 miles northeast of Reno) and so promised to not drive anywhere near flat out. The car we were using was a fifth-hand mid-Seventies Toyota Corolla, that had seen many better days. In particular, the electrical wiring had been done with much imagination and little skill. It looked like something I'd have done.

The weather was beautiful for the weekend: cold but clear. Reno had had a dusting of snow Friday evening late, but the roads were clear going out to the desert. The sand and gravel mining haul roads that we raced on were just slightly damp and perfect: no dust, and as much grip as you can have on such a loose surface.

More details about the car: it was a fully prepared rally car, full roll cage, all the safety equipment needed and so on. The race seats were a little snug for me (I only had a couple of hip pointers by the end of the weekend) but my driver had numb buns from his size and the seat's lack of same. Very uncomfortable for him.

All the sound deadening and insulation had been stripped from the interior. Think tin can on roller skates. With the helmets on, it was nearly impossible to hear the radio or each other while we were in motion. Normally, we would have had an intercom wired in to the helmets, but there hadn't been time for such preparations. I had got a pair of ear-bud headphones at the local mall's Rat Shack, and tried stuffing them under the helmet once or twice, but the phone plug kept vibrating loose from the speaker jack on the radio, so I abandoned them after the first day on the road.

I did mention the electrical wiring in the car, didn't I? On Saturday, we began losing power, the engine bogging down in places where it should have been singing happy songs. Then we stopped at one checkpoint and couldn't get restarted. No

tail lights or turn signals either. With the sun setting, we hard wired the fuel pump to the battery, jumpered juice to the turn signals and headed back from the stages to Reno. Made it to the event hotel (Reno Hilton, nice joint) with little extra drama. My driver spent a cold (like frostbite cold) evening rewiring stuff for Sunday. I really had a vacation on this event compared to the hours (and sometime misery) I spend on Oregon Trail, I just went back to my room.

Sunday began better, the car started relatively easily (for twin carburetors in freezing temperatures) and we headed off to the stages northwest of Pyramid Lake and east of Gerlach. Got through the first two stages with no problems. Well, the car was a bit hard to start. Suspected dying starter motor, so we made sure we pointed the Crayola downhill after that. Third stage of the day, we strap in, crank up the engine and are waiting the top of the minute to start the stage, when acrid (and I mean ACRID) smoke begins to fill the car.

Up until then, I didn't know I could actually exit the car, under the roll cage, with my helmet on. Most of you have never seen me move that quick. Turned out, a splice had shed its electrician's tape and grounded the hot lead going to the fuel pump. Luckily, it only burned off a few feet of insulation before a fuse blew and not the whole car. No real fire, just nasty smoke. We were delayed about ten minutes fixing the wiring issue.

We finally finished the route for the day and proceeded back to the event hotel. The finish banquet was going to be a pizza feed, which for some reason didn't appeal. I voted for exhaustion and retired to the little motel a few miles down the road where I had been staying along with other volunteers. One interesting thing about Reno, it is not a very pedestrian friendly town. They have five lane, 45 mph roads with no sidewalks in many places.

The return commute through northern California was pretty

uneventful. The weather that had threatened the previous week had dissipated: snow on the sides of the road, but bare pavement and bright sunshine, all the way to the Siskiyou summit. Descending in to Ashland, ran in to the wonderful Rogue Valley smog (worse than Los Angeles, by all reports). Fog and drizzle all the way up I5.

The local hams that came out to help with the rally were great! They had their own portable repeater (and knew exactly which ridge top to put it on), and lots of experience with rally and desert racing. I can't say enough good things about those guys: they definitely had their act together.

On the way north, I was listening to the morning nets on 40 meters. Happened to check in to the RV net, with net control in the Bay Area. Heard our friend [WA6MDI](#) check in, from Lafayette, Louisiana. Since net acknowledged him, and I had heard him clearly as well, I asked for a brief contact. Net said "go", and Dick and I had a nice two or three minute contact before I turned it back to net. They had weathered Wilma with a little damage, but not too bad. Nice contact for 100 watts (maybe) out of the '706, in to a "hamstick", mobile. Definitely my best mobile DX so far.

Spent the rest of the day listening to the daytime nets on 40 as I buzzed up I5 to Salem, hearing many of the usual suspects from the Willamette Valley. Stopped long enough in a parking lot in Salem to do net control for the Monday evening Mid-Valley net on two meters, then back over the Willamette and Luckiamute to beautiful down town Falls City.

Nice road trip.

Any time you want to start a real rag-chewing session, just ask me about what's going on with rally these days.

73  
chris p  
ad7gt

ROADS  
Meeting Minutes  
December 8, 2005

Meeting was called to order at 7:7:02 PM by Bob Boswell. There were no previous meeting minutes to be read because it was the dinner meeting at Farrol's. Bob then asked for the treasures report Please see attachment: Bob told us that that Harry would not be attending the meeting due to illness. We all wish you a very speedy recovery Harry.

We had a very good turn out 17 members and 2 guest speakers Bob and Sherry Winston they shared they're Florida and Texas hurricane experiences with us and the assistance that they gave the Red Cross. It was a very interesting and informative presentation. Dudley received dues from Ken and and Bob Winston and two other members will be mailing theirs to Dudley.

Feryl announced that should we wish to have our dinner meeting at Farrol's again that we could request that her son be their waiter.

Old Business: We have not yet heard from the IRS regarding our non profit status but we did receive a letter stating that we were in the system and that our application was being reviewed.

New Business: KK7UU made the announcement that our web site was set up in PDF format and if anyone would like to see some others to let him know and he would try to make it happen.

Ken then asked Boswell what the problem was with HF and he said that the sunspots were the problem and that it would more then likely last for some time but would then

return to normal. The larger the sunspot the more the problem.

Bob suggested that Ken elmer Mr. Winston on the general class studys'. And then there was talk about making an elmers list and at our next meeting working one on one to help each other.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:22PM

### **Treasurer's Report November 2005**

<b>Checkbook Balance October 31, 2005</b>	<b>\$3380.64</b>
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>.00</b>
<b>Checks</b>	<b>.00</b>
<b>Balance as of November 30, 2005</b>	<b>\$3380.64</b>

<b>Petty Cash Balance Oct. 31, 2005</b>	<b>\$116.20</b>
<b>2 Memberships</b>	<b>40.00</b>
<b>Door Prize Raffle</b>	<b>20.00</b>
<b>Transfer to checking</b>	<b>.00</b>
<b>Balance as of November 30, 2005</b>	<b>\$ 176.20</b>

Thanks to Feryl, KE7BII, our Secretary, and to Dudley, W7NLI, our Treasurer, for the timely club business reports. When I last talked to Dudley, he had recently had confirmation that his leg bones had finally started to make significant progress in the knitting process, and that he had begun the implementation of weight-bearing

exercises in his physical therapy program. You'll be side-hillin' again in no time at all, Dudley!

I hope to see all of you at the meeting, and don't forget we have a VE session this Saturday morning at 09:00 in the same room as our monthly meeting. Any of you who need to upgrade or take the CW test are invited and encouraged to appear. We have a full array of Volunteer Examiners ready to sign your CSCE's!

Many thanks for being patient readers.....73!

AB7X  
Harry  
VP ROADS  
VE

