



# Southwestern REACTer



MAY 2018







## SOUTHWESTERN

### REACT, Inc.

PO Box 632955  
San Diego, CA 92163-2955  
619-309-4299

[board@southwesternreact.org](mailto:board@southwesternreact.org)  
[www.swreact.com](http://www.swreact.com)

## OFFICERS

**President:** Roger McCollough  
SWR 098

**Vice-President:** John Wright  
SWR 042

**Secretary:** Jay Pistiolas  
SWR 046

**Treasurer:** June McCollough  
SWR 054

**Director-At-Large:**  
Jim Patterson  
SWR 151

SWR's mission is to prepare for communications during emergencies and disasters. This preparation is accomplished through working community events such as: The Lakeside Western Days, and North Park Toyland parades, the Midnight Madness Bicycle Ride and Fiesta Island Time Trials, the Silver Strand Half-Marathon, the San Diego International Triathlon and the Descanso Endurance Horse Ride

The Southwestern REACT General Meeting is held the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM at: 2650 Melbourne Drive, San Diego, CA

## Reactive Team Net

The Team net is held on the first and fourth Thursdays of the month at 8:00 PM on the 449.440 Community based Repeater with a negative offset and a PL tone of 107.2 (Mt. Otay)

**Editor's Note:** As many of you already aware, Southwestern REACT President Roger McCollough was recently hospitalized with some breathing issues. Well, I am pleased to report that as of this writing (5/8), Roger is out of the hospital and at a rehab facility. June reports that he is doing very well and could go home in the next day or two. We all wish Roger a speedy and complete recovery! ⚡

## Why Upgrade Your License?

By John Wright, SWR 042, Vice-President

## Become a more valuable operator

Many amateur radio operators, especially those who get into the hobby to participate in event/emergency communications or for preparedness, often ask this question. Granted, most emergency communications is done on VHF or UHF, primarily because of the sheer number of repeaters on those frequencies. (There are over fifty VHF/UHF repeaters maintained just by clubs alone in San Diego County. This doesn't include privately-owned repeaters.)

However, in the event of a major disaster, many, if not all, of these repeaters may be unavailable. Factors such as collapse of antenna platforms, no power grid and the failure of back-up power systems can all lead to the lack of repeater coverage. A good example is what happened in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Even now, portions of the island are still without electricity. And, even if they are operational, VHF/UHF communications are limited by their line-of-sight characteristics.

So, what can we, as emergency communications operators, do? The VHF/UHF bands are not the only bands available to us. The HF spectrum (10 meters

and below) isn't limited by line-of-sight and can be used to pass voice, data or CW traffic over long distances. This could be essential in the event of a disaster, especially to pass information about needed aid. And with the advent of radio-based e-mail systems, such as WINLINK, the HF spectrum takes on added importance.

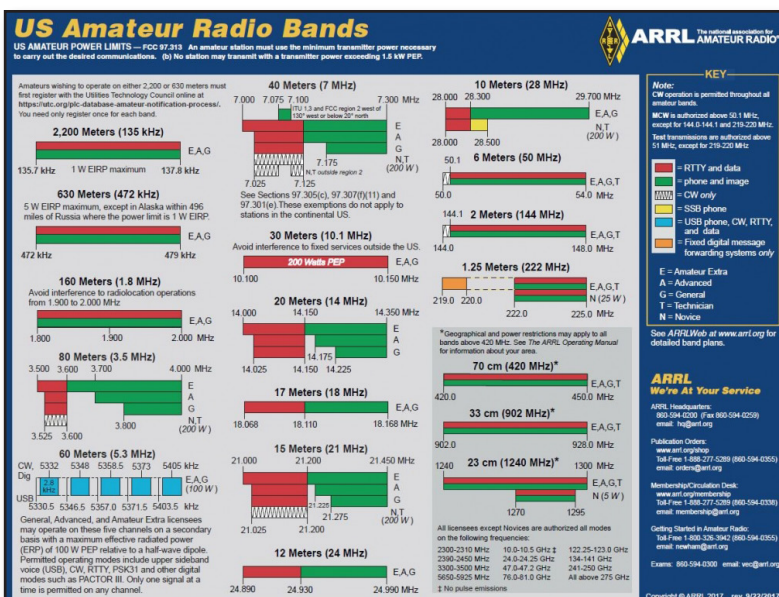


FIGURE 1: Chart of the Amateur radio spectrum in the United States, showing allocations for each license class. Courtesy ARRL

Unfortunately, Technician License holders have only a very small segment of the 10 meter band available to them for voice communications and only CW privileges below that. [Figure 1]

So, what's the solution? Upgrading your license to at least General Class... By doing so you gain access to almost the complete HF spectrum (additional small segments are reserved for Advanced and Extra Class license holders.) This will increase your value as an

emergency communications operator.

How difficult is it to upgrade? It isn't... The upgrade requires another 35 question examination, similar to the one you took to gain your Technician License. There are hundreds of resources (way too many to mention) available to assist in exam preparation and there are classes available locally that are keyed toward the examination. Exam sessions are held on Saturdays across the county and the cost is minimal (if not free.)

## "Alexa, Help Me With Ham Radio"

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

I have had an Amazon Alexa (<https://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Echo-And-Alexa-Devices/b?ie=UTF8&node=9818047011>) for nearly a year now. Mostly, I just use it to listen to internet radio stations or tell me a joke, but I think it has more potential than that. For example, I've written before about how I'd like to develop an Alexa skill to control my IC-7300 (<https://www.kb6nu.com/use-alexa-amateur-radio/>). I haven't gotten around to that yet, but, Joe, N3HEE, has just published an Alexa skill called Continuous Wave ([https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B07C7HS47J/?ref=skill\\_dsk\\_skb\\_sr\\_o](https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B07C7HS47J/?ref=skill_dsk_skb_sr_o)). It's designed to help you learn Morse Code.

To use this skill, you have to first enable it. Once enabled, say, "Alexa, open Continuous Wave." This opens the skill at the main menu. You can then say any of the following at any voice prompt...

- Learn
- Practice
- Alphabet
- Common words
- Random words
- Words
- Sentences
- Call signs
- Contest
- Quick Brown Fox
- QSO
- Help
- Stop – To end your session.

I've just played around with this app for a short time, but I've found it to be quite entertaining. It does, however, have one big drawback. You can't set the speed. It's currently limited to sending at 20 words per minute only.

Also, the learn function could use a little refining. When you give the command "learn," it asks you for a character,

Some will ask "Hasn't the ARRL already petitioned for increased Technician privileges in the HF bands?" Yes, they have, but this is far from becoming a done deal (if it ever happens at all.) The petition hasn't been opened for public comment yet and that period has to be complete before the FCC makes a decision.

So what's holding you back? Nothing. As Roger would say "Git 'er done!" ✈

sends that character three times, and then asks you for another. If you could set the speed at which the skill sends characters, it could teach a character like the K7QO Code Course, first sending the character slowly, then ramping up the speed.

Overall, though, I think this is a great first shot at a usable Alexa skill for teaching Morse Code. I hope this is the first of many versions of this skill.

### **Other ham radio skills:**

While I was poking around on Amazon, I decided to see what other amateur radio skills might be available. Here are a few that I found:

- Ham Exam ([https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B01N7NQ3JE/?ref=skill\\_dsk\\_skb\\_sr\\_6&qid=1524602919](https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B01N7NQ3JE/?ref=skill_dsk_skb_sr_6&qid=1524602919)). Ask Alexa to ask you questions from the Technician Class question pool.
- Ham Lookup ([https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B073YL88SL/?ref=skill\\_dsk\\_pnps\\_dp\\_1](https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B073YL88SL/?ref=skill_dsk_pnps_dp_1)). Allows you to look up amateurs by call sign. Information is provided from the callbook.info database.
- Ham Radio Propagation Forecast ([https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B073THV6ZP/?ref=skill\\_dsk\\_pnps\\_dp\\_o](https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B073THV6ZP/?ref=skill_dsk_pnps_dp_o)). Reports the latest forecasts directly from HamQSL (run by NoNBH).
- ARRL Audio News ([https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B078Y7NGYT/?ref=skill\\_dsk\\_skb\\_sr\\_1&qid=1524750783](https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B078Y7NGYT/?ref=skill_dsk_skb_sr_1&qid=1524750783)). Adds ARRL Audio News to your Alexa flash briefing.

### **Building your own voice app:**

The Continuous Wave Alexa skill was developed using tools found at VoiceApps.Com. Two other websites—Pullstring (<https://pullstring.com>) and StoryLine



(<https://getstoryline.com>)—also have tools to help you build voice apps. And, Amazon has an online tutorial that will teach you how to build an Alexa app. I'm just getting started with these tools, so I can't recommend one over the others, but they do look like they'll make developing voice apps easier.

Since I'm currently in the process of updating my No Nonsense Technician Class License Study Guide, it occurs to me that I should also develop an Alexa skill for

drilling students on test questions. I guess you could call them audio flashcards. Stay tuned for that. ✈

---

*When he's not trying to figure out how to build voice apps, Dan blogs about amateur radio at [KB6NU.Com](http://KB6NU.Com), teaches ham radio classes, and operates CW on the HF bands. Look for him on 30m, 40m, and 80m. You can email him about the voice apps that you like at [cw-geek@kb6nu.com](mailto:cw-geek@kb6nu.com).*

## Campagnolo Gran Fondo

By Michael Bailey, SWR 092, Coordinator

Southwestern REACT members responded to a request to provide communications support to the San Diego Campagnolo Gran Fondo bike event. Over 1400 bicycle riders participated in the April 8th event that involved 4 separate rides over a 100 mile route. The challenging 98 mile ride included a 26 mile section on desolate east county roads that had areas lacking cell phone coverage. Luckily, our primary SANDRA repeater provided adequate coverage throughout the geographical area.

The Gran Fondo organizers requested SW REACT provide team members at each of the 5 rest stops as well as monitor the four routes for injured or fatigued riders.

Ten members responded to the call for assistance allowing full coverage of the rest stops and 3 mobile units to patrol the routes. Luckily, no significant medical emergencies occurred but an unidentified nefarious individual scattered thumbtacks on a downhill portion of the 98 mile course resulting in over 50 flats. Jim Patterson, SWR #151 and Mike Bailey, SWR #92, responded by shuttling riders to the bike mechanic at the next rest stop as well as notifying law enforcement of the hazard.

This was the largest event in recent history for Southwestern REACT and the team members, to a person, rose to the occasion, displaying incredible professionalism, flexibility and ingenuity as they surmounted challenges that arose along the way. In addition to the needed communications throughout the event, the team members' experience with similar events came through as they created solutions when concerns arose. George Reeves, SWR #81 creatively used his vehicle's public address system to warn cyclists of an upcoming rest stop around a blind curve. Don Dodson, SWR#55 and Wayne Oliver, SWR #142, alerted cyclists to a poorly marked rest stop that was being inadvertently bypassed, requiring bikers to backtrack, creating a traffic hazard.

June McCollough, SWR #54 did triple duty and a superb job as net control, ride director shadow and trainer as she took a potential new member, Daryl Williams, under her wing and had him be net control for periods under her watchful eye. Our esteemed President, Roger McCollough helped with net control, provided comms at Rest Stop #5 and swept the short course for riders.



A busy day at rest stop number 2 in Alpine.

Dan McDougal, SWR 063

Special thanks to Daniel McDougal, SWR #63 and Michelle Harmon, SWR #64, who set up at Rest Stop #2 in Alpine, a beautiful comm center. In addition to tracking riders, they also did some public relations work, taking complaints from angry motorists about some of the cyclists' actions on the road! **[See cover photo.]**

Jay Pistiolas, SWR #46, and McKenzie Jackson, SWR #37, put in a very long day awaiting the last of the riders to straggle through Rest Stop #4.

The event organizers were very impressed with the assistance and support provided by REACT and were looking forward to our collaboration at their next event. ✈



## More Pictures From Rest Stop 2

Photos by Dan McDougal, SWR 063





## Lakeside Western Days Parade

Article and Photos By Jay Pistiolas SWR 046

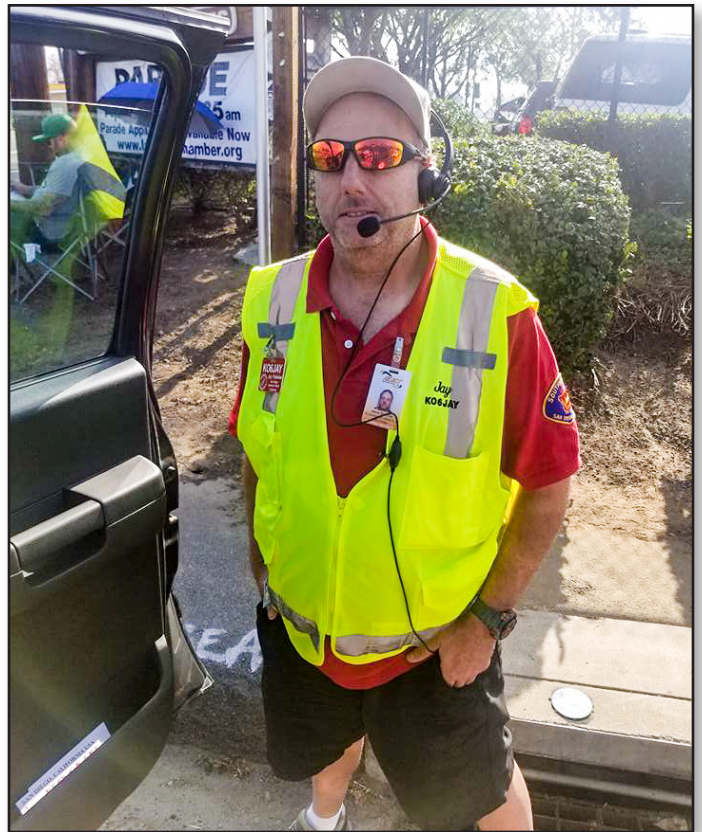
An early morning wake-up on April 28 brought us to the Lakeside Café for a hearty breakfast, lots of coffee and our briefing for the Lakeside Western Days Parade. Each REACT member was assigned an announcing station along the parade the route.

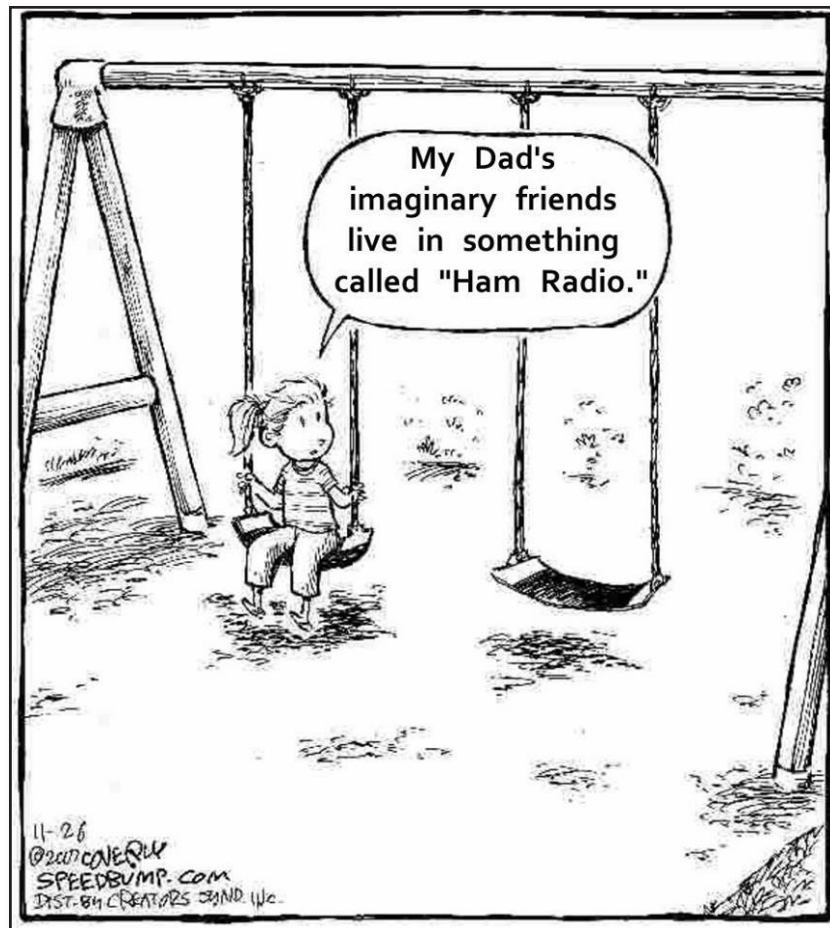
The parade began at around 9 AM and our team was in place reading to spring into action. The communications went well by using the Rattlesnake repeater as before (special thanks to Joe Acevedo, N6SIX, for the use of the repeater.) The parade itself ran smooth though there were numerous gaps in between the participants and several no-shows. George Reeves SWR 81 was at

step-off and did a fine job in relaying vital information to the rest of the team.

REACT Team members were, Jay Pistiolas SWR 46, Daryl Williams SWR 56T, Marilyn Jensen SWR 68, Walter Walenborn SWR 89, Don Dodson SWR 55 who was also our coordinator and Net Control, George Reeves SWR 81, George DeLaBarre, SWR 76 and special thanks to Patrick Gooden, K6PFG, who was brought on board to help us out.

It was great working another successful parade with everyone on a sunny day in Lakeside. ✈





Upcoming Events	
Event	Date
Descanso Endurance Horse Ride	05/19-20/2018 (Sat-Sun) <b>CANCELLED! (See below)</b>
San Diego International Triathlon	06/24/2018 (Sun)
Giro di San Diego	10/21/2018 (Sun)
Silver Strand Half Marathon	11/11/2018 (Sun)

Dear Riders:

It is necessary for me to cancel the Descanso Endurance Ride and the Descanso Ride and Tie which has been scheduled for the weekend of May 19/20, 2018. The Cuyamaca State Park has set the cost for the permit for using the public trails at more than \$3,400. There has not been sufficient interest in the ride to generate enough entries to cover the costs for the permit fees, basecamp, vets, etc. These rides never make money, and it is always necessary to add money to pay for the extras, but David and I are unwilling to cover the several thousand dollars that would be required to go forward when there appears to be so little interest in the ride this year. I have only received 63 entries for Saturday and 31 entries for Sunday and only 4 ride and tie teams have entered. While it may seem that this is a premature decision because it is still 3 weeks away, but I am at the point where awards need to be ordered and deposits

placed, veterinarians need to be released and riders who use these rides for conditioning, need to plan for a replacement ride.

I want to thank the loyal riders and new riders who did enter the ride. I appreciate their support. I especially want to thank Challenge Ranch who had 19 entries and two ride and tie teams. I know that Challenge Ranch's kids have been working very hard to get their horses ready for this event, and I know that they will be very disappointed that it is necessary for me to cancel the ride.

I have identified a possible site for a new ride in Campo and hope to possibly get this scheduled before the end of this year.

Terry Woolley Howe



# 2018 Prescott Hamfest at ERAU

*2018 ARRL Arizona State Convention*

*Amateur Radio Council of Arizona (ARCA) Annual Meetings*

**Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU)**

3700 Willow Creek Road Prescott, AZ 86301 (on Haas Blvd)

*June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018*

Hosted by: **Eagle Amateur Radio Club at ERAU and  
Yavapai Amateur Radio Club**



**Friday– 7 AM to Noon - Tailgate Flea Market**

**7 AM to 4 PM - Indoor Commercial Vendors**

**7 AM to 4:30 PM - Technician Exam Review**

**Noon to 4 PM - Seminars – CHANGE of HOURS**

**5 PM to 7:30 PM - VE License Exam (\$15)**

**Saturday 7 AM to Noon - Tailgate Flea Market**

**7 AM to 3PM - Indoor Commercial Vendors**

**9 AM – AZ Near Space Research - Balloon Launch**

**Noon to 3 PM – Seminars - CHANGE of HOURS**

**3 PM – Grand Prize Raffle Drawings**

## Featuring

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| ✓ Tail Gate Flea Market | ✓ Seminars for Beginners, Intermediate, & Advanced         |
| ✓ Consignment Sales     | ✓ Indoor Commercial Vendors                                |
| ✓ ARRL Booth            | ✓ DXCC Card Checking                                       |
| ✓ Youth Activities      | ✓ <u>Limited FREE RV Dry Camping Thursday &amp; Friday</u> |
| ✓ Special Event Station | ✓ <u>nights Only - PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED</u>        |
| ✓ Hourly Prize Drawings | ✓ Grand Prize Raffle Drawings – 3 PM Saturday              |
| ✓ Indoor Social Area    | ✓ Student Union Café open from 0600 to 1400 Fri/Sat        |

**General Admission \$5.00 (good for both days)**

**Friday & Saturday Tailgate - Parking lot space \$10.00, each addl space \$5 (for both days)**

**Friday & Saturday - Commercial Vendors Indoor Table \$20.00, each additional table \$10**

**Indoor Club/ Information Booths FREE – MUST PRE-REGISTER**

**Full-Time Students FREE with Student ID/ 12 Years and Younger FREE**

*20-45 minute Seminars being sought for Friday and Saturday*

*Contact: Larry Dorrell KG7TTD ([dorrell007@msn.com](mailto:dorrell007@msn.com))*



**An ARRL sanctioned and ARCA co-sponsored Event**

**Contact Hamfest Chair Person: Frank Bender K8FB ([k8fb@w7yrc.org](mailto:k8fb@w7yrc.org))**



Talk-In Frequency: W7YRC 146.880 MHz (-) PL 100 Hz

**NO GUNS, DRUGS, ALCOHOL, SMOKING, VAPING, OR FIREWORKS PER ERAU POLICY  
LEASHED OR CAGED ANIMALS ARE PERMITTED ONLY IN OUTSIDE PUBLIC AREAS**

Check for updates and additional details: [www.prescotthamfest.com](http://www.prescotthamfest.com)

Updated 02/19/2018