

## **PUSH TO TALK**

**January 2008**

**Push to Talk is the monthly newsletter of the Inland Empire Amateur Radio Club, an ARRL Special Service Club. The club website is <http://www.w6ier.org>. W6IER repeaters are 144.460 and 447.220. Both repeaters have a standard negative offset and 77.0 PL. The club 2-meter check-in net is each Thursday at 7:30 pm.**

**This issue is text-only. Hopefully someone will step forward to be Newsletter Editor before February, to provide us with full color and photos again.**

### **GENERAL MEETING**

**The next IEARC meeting is January 5. Meetings are held at 9 am on the first Saturday of the month in the Ontario PFF Bank meeting room on Euclid Avenue at D Street.**

### **BUDGET MEETING REPORT**

**On December 29 the 2008 Budget was discussed and approved by a vote of 5-0 by the board members present for presentation to the membership at the January General Meeting.**

### **SWAPMEET**

**The IEARC swapmeet is held on the second Saturday morning of each month in the parking lot of Cable Airport in Upland. Enter from Benson Avenue at 13th Street. There will be no IEARC Swapmeet on January 12, due to the air show (which includes a car show) at Cable Airport that weekend. The air show runs from 8am to 4pm both days. Parking is free, but there are admission charges: Adults \$7, Students \$5, Children under 5 are free.**

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**NEW EXTRA CLASS QUESTION POOL**

**From the ARRL web site**

**New Amateur Extra Class Question Pool Released -- The National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) has released the new pool of questions for the Amateur Extra class license. This pool will become effective for examinations given on or after July 1, 2008, and should be in service until June 30, 2012. The pool, which consists of 741 questions and 12 graphics, can be downloaded from the NCVEC Web site in Word, PDF or RTF formats. If you have any questions concerning the new Amateur Extra question pool, please contact the NCVEC's Question Pool Committee via e-mail.**

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**NEW DXCC ENTITY**

**From an ARRL DX Bulletin**

**The ARRL DXCC Desk is pleased to announce the addition of St Barthelemy (FJ) to the DXCC List, making the island entity number 338 with an effective date of 14 December, 2007. Cards with contacts dated December 14, 2007 or after will be accepted for DXCC credit. New card submissions for St Barthelemy will not be accepted until January 1, 2008 in order to allow time for administrative adjustments.**

**The "event date" that caused St. Barthelemy to be added to the DXCC list was December 14, 2007, the date the US State Department Fact sheet was updated by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. This update added St Barthelemy to the List of Dependencies and Areas of Special Sovereignty with its Administrative Center in Gustavia, qualifying it under DXCC rules in Section II -- 1 Political Entities (c).**

**NEW PREFIX FOR BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**  
**From an ARRL Special Bulletin**

**New Prefix for Bosnia-Herzegovina Officially Announced -- In response to a request from the Ministry of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina in August, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) withdrew the call sign prefix allocation T9A-T9Z for Bosnia and Herzegovina and made a new allocation, E7A-E7Z. The change was made initially on a provisional basis under authority of the ITU Secretary-General and was confirmed by the 2007 World Radiocommunication Conference to be effective November 17, 2007.**

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**ARRL CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSE REGISTRATION**  
**From the ARRL web site**

**Registration remains open through Sunday, January 6, 2008 for these online courses beginning on Friday January 18, 2008: Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Level 2 ([EC-002](#)) \$45; Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Level 3 ([EC-003R2](#)) \$45; Antenna Modeling ([EC-004](#)) \$85; HF Digital Communications ([EC-005](#)) \$65; VHF/UHF -- Life Beyond the Repeater ([EC-008](#)) \$65, and Radio Frequency Propagation ([EC-011](#)) \$65. Each online course has been developed in segments -- learning units with objectives, informative text, student activities and quizzes. Courses are interactive, and some include direct communications with a Mentor/Instructor. Students register for a particular session that may be 8, 12 or 16 weeks (depending on the course) and they may access the course at any time of day during the course period, completing lessons and activities at times convenient for their personal schedule. Mentors assist students by answering questions, reviewing assignments and activities, as well as providing helpful feedback. Interaction with mentors is conducted through e-mail; there is no appointed time the student must be present -- allowing complete flexibility for the student to work when and where it is convenient. To learn more, visit the CCE Course Listing page or contact the Continuing Education Program Coordinator.**

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**SUNSPOTS (only one spot to start 2008), John kq6es**

**Click on this link for a daily view of the sun: <http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov/sunspots/>  
If you are active on HF, want to follow the new solar cycle, or are interested in astronomy, this is an interesting site with links to many great photos and articles.**

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**W6IER WORKED ALL STATES, John kq6es**

**W6IER has received the ARRL WAS Certificate, #52,567. This is thanks to contest and Field Day contacts made by many different IEARC members over the last couple of years. As contest chair, I sent and received the QSL cards, and as an ARRL HF Awards Manager, after being told by the ARRL there was no conflict of interest, I checked the cards and sent in the application. Although the award says "W6IER" it also says "ISLAND Empire Amateur Radio Club"! A corrected certificate will be requested.**

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**W6IER CONTEST NEWS, John kq6es**

The January issue of CQ has the results of the 2007 WPX Phone contest, in which I participated along with Becky K6EY, Ted K6ZCL, and Jon KR6ER. The final W6IER totals are 218 contacts, 161 prefixes and 60,858 points. Five CA stations sent in a multi-operator log, and we were NOT 5th place!

We will not see W6IER in the 2007 ARRL Phone Sweepstakes results (just Tony N600 and I took part) because I somehow erased the log. Sorry! But we had fun and spread the club call around the country again. We would not have received the section certificate for the third straight year because another Orange section multi-operator station (W6BBL) sent in a higher scoring log.

**Major January Contests**

ARRL RTTY Roundup	1800Z, Jan 5 to 2400Z, Jan 6
Kid's Day	1800Z to 2400Z, Jan 6
North American QSO Party, CW	1800Z, Jan 12 to 0600Z, Jan 13
North American QSO Party, Phone	1800Z, Jan 19 to 0600Z, Jan 20
ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes	1900Z, Jan 19 to 0400Z, Jan 21
CQ 160-Meter Contest, CW	0000Z, Jan 26 to 2359Z, Jan 27

See the January QST or go to <http://www.hornucopia.com> for details.

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**EQUIPMENT REVIEW, John kq6es**  
**RIGBlaster Pro from West Mountain Radio**

I bought this radio-computer interface mainly to do three things, with the option to do more later: send CW and RTTY from my logging programs at the push of a key; use my computer sound card to record voice audio files for later transmission over the air in contests; and have two-way communication between the computer and transceiver (I have a FT-1000MP).

Set-up was easier than expected. The manual is not hard to follow, but not all radios and sound cards use the same names for audio and control ports, and some common sense and trial and error may be needed for some cable connections. When setting the internal jumpers I needed to know whether I had an "older" Yaesu or not, but there was little guidance given for what "older" meant, so I had to guess, although on-line help is available if you get stuck. Make sure you get the USB version if your computer does not have a serial port available, set-up is very easy. The unit comes with a complete set of cables, but you may need to get more, depending on your needs and your transceiver. If your radio's CAT port is male, like my FT-1000MP (but not all MP's), you'll need an adapter, which I found at Radio Shack for a few dollars, and if you need phono (RCA) plugs instead of the provided phone plugs, you will need adapters or new cables. These items are inexpensive and always available from Radio Shack. A CD Rom is included with a large selection of digital mode software, which will get you started with RTTY, PSK31, SSTV, Packet, and much more.

Once everything is ready you'll still need to make the right settings in each of the software programs for everything to work right. Be sure you write everything down so you can easily restore your settings. A set of sticky labels is included with the RIGBlaster to attach to each cable end so you won't forget what goes where.

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When I had everything ready, everything worked well, although for audio file recording and playback you need to be familiar with your sound card's basic controls. The RIGBlaster manual explains these well. The front panel LED's are helpful in basic troubleshooting. When I keyed up some CW and the PTT and CW lights came on but nothing went over the air, I knew the cause was between the RIGBlaster and the radio, and a quick check showed that I had a cable plugged into the wrong place. Another handy feature is a Level Set knob on the front panel, to adjust audio input levels without needing to open your sound card controls.

A feature which may be unique to the RIGBlaster Pro is the Process switch, which allows audio to be routed from your usual on-air microphone through your sound card, where its controls can be used to adjust sound quality, and back to the transceiver for instant transmission. This can be used for recording also. Your sound card must be duplex-capable to take advantage of this.

A more knowledgeable builder than I am may be able to put their own equipment together for some or all of the unit's features, but having everything packaged together is very convenient, and the extra cost was worth it to me in avoiding the time and frustrations that always come with do-it-myself equipment. There are less costly versions of RIGBlaster (the Pro sells for around \$280) which may be enough for your needs. You may want to check the RIGBlaster Plus (\$150) and other West Mountain Radio models, as well as the MFJ-1275 and 1279 (\$140). If you just want to try digital modes, basic sound card interfaces are available from both WMR and MFJ for \$60 (a future article will help you get on the air with no frills RTTY for under \$10). You'll want to check on what each unit does, what comes with it, and decide what your needs, technical savvy and budget are before making a decision.

The April 2003 QST has a review of the RIGBlaster Pro for those who want more details. An archive of QST reviews is on the ARRL Members Only web site.

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I hope to see many of you at our first meeting of 2008.

**2008 IEARC OFFICERS**

<b>President</b>	<b>Chuck Sweeten AI6I</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Bob Burnap KE6QET</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>John Simmons KQ6ES</b>
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<b>1st year Board Member</b>	<b>Ian Venable KI6IES</b>

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**1/02/08**