



VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA

# VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB

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June 2009

## President's Message

Presidents Message June 2009

Well June already and we have a great line up this month. First off we have the "Pizza Party" Wednesday June 10<sup>th</sup>, the Round Table Pizza Parlor, 888 Alamo Drive, in the Alamo Plaza shopping center, (Merchant Street @ Alamo Drive).

Secondly we have the pinnacle of the summer, which is Field Day. Field Day will be held at the Hogue Ranch (W6OMF), 7372 Paddon Road, Vacaville, CA 95688, (*From Vacaville, N/B I-505 to Midway Road, left turn under the freeway, then right on Paddon Road, Hogue Ranch is on the right*). We will be setting up around 8-9 AM and on the air at 11:00 AM. We will broadcasting for 24 hours straight, (maybe), but late into the wee morning. Yours truly will supply the hot dogs and buns and we would like folks to bring chips, salads (potato or macaroni), drinks and some kind of dessert. If all goes right, we should have a great time.

Looking forward to seeing you all at both events,

Mike Vieira W6MAV

## Field Day Opportunities

Field Day is probably the most fun you'll have in amateur radio. Running a station from a field environment with your friends couldn't be any funner!

We'll have at least one complete station for HF that we can run either phone or CW. I imagine most operators will want to run phone which is great! Next to the operator we need a logger. A logger writes down the contacts or in this case inputs them into the laptop computer on a logging program. That's about it! Pretty easy stuff.

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We'll be QRV as long as we have operators and the bands are open. Don't let a Technician license stop you, we'll get you on the air. This is not a contest, there is no performance standards we need to achieve or point totals we need to shoot for, it's all about fun.

The location as our president mentioned is at Larry Hogue's QTH. You can go to the Field Day Locator on line at the ARRL website and get a Google map to the site.

Food, radio, and crazy ham radio folks...it couldn't be any funner!

## Around the Bands

By Jerry Olive KD6WKY

We had some interesting activities on HF the past month which sort of give you a taste of what it would be like if the sun spot cycle were more active. At the end of May and into the first few days of June we had a nice little run of sun spots going.

In reviewing my log for that timeline, I worked into Europe a lot. One evening I picked up the phone instead of working CW and in less than 30 minutes worked 14 Russian stations with my antenna beaming north over the pole. Some stations were stronger than others, but all workable.

During the same timeline there was a contest weekend as well. One of the *CQ Magazine* contests was going on on CW that weekend. Lots of activity there.

This past weekend was interesting too. There was a collection of amateur radio clubs that work off of museum ships on the air commemorating the 65th anniversary of the D-Day landing at Normandy, France. I worked a couple of them but I think there were 37 total stations all on the air this weekend.

I worked USS Batfish club station in Muskogee, OK which is a submarine. Not go figure how they got a submarine like that to Muskogee, OK. I worked another club station in OR that was operating from a Coast Guard ship as well.

I heard the USS Hornet club station on the air over in Alameda. They were pretty busy working operators back east. The busiest station I heard that had a big pile up going was the USS New Jersey club station NJ2BB. Man...they had it going. In looking on-line, their QSL card is pretty nice. I did not work them, I tried a few times, then got pulled away from the radio

for honeydews and taxi service for the kids.

I worked an interesting station one evening last week just dialing up the band on 20 meters SSB. JD1BMM on Minami-Torishima which is generally west of Midway Island. From what I can tell, the only thing on that island is a Loran Station so this guy must be part of that crew maintaining the navigational equipment and keeping it on the air.

If you want a QSL card from this guy, you'd better do exactly what he says. Go to QRZ.com and read what he tells you to do if you want a direct QSL card. I decided it was too much work and will just send him a card via the QSL Bureau. He told me that would be fine.

I finally worked John Shaw ZL1BYZ in New Zealand on SSB. I have him in my log 14 times on CW and most of the HF bands. This is the first time I worked him on SSB. That was fun. Yes he has an accent.

I received some QSL cards too from far away places. The furthest place was 3B8CF Mauritius Island which is in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Seewoosankar "Jacky" Mandary was the operator. From here, that QTH is within 1,000 miles of being half way around the world. I worked him on 40m SSB using my dipole antenna that runs from the tree in my front yard to the tree in the back yard.

I also received another interesting QSL card from JD1BMH on Chichijima Ogasawara Island. That place is pretty remote as well, but a bit closer to Japan than Minami-Torishima Island. That contact was a 20m CW QSO.

A few cards came in from EU and Asia as well, Poland and Asiatic Russia. As long as the openings continue, working over the pole should be interesting.

73!

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**VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB—2009  
ELECTED OFFICERS**

President: Mike Vieira, W6MAV  
 Vice President: Open and taking resumes!  
 Secretary: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY  
 Treasurer: Bob Hewitt, W6HEW

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Director: Skip Lawson, AF6HC  
 Director: Chris Jones, KD7TQO  
 Director: Antonio Del Rio, N6ZGB  
 Director: Glen Mitchell W6JLX

**APPOINTED POSITIONS**

Net Control Chairperson: Open  
 Activities Chairperson: Board of Directors  
 Newsletter Editor: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY  
 Newsletter Publisher & Distributor: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

**May 2009 Club Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 7:11pm by club president Mike Vieira W6MAV with vigor and excitement, nobody pounds that gavel like Mike.

No financial report as posted at this meeting but a follow up action would be taken to see that the financial report is published in the June newsletter.

The April 2009 meeting minutes were approved as submitted by a voice vote of the board.

**Old Business:** Discussion about Field Day, location, equipment, and food was bantered about with glee. More FD info would follow with the presentation by Bob Hewitt K6HEW.

The June meeting at Round Table Pizza is set.

No official summer club meetings will take place.

**New Business:** None.

The 50/50 drawing was held. The winner?

The program for the evening was presented by Bob Hewitt K6HEW and focused on Field Day 2009. We discussed FD, what we could do, and what we would do. It was noted that we did not submit a log to the ARRL last year.

This year the goal is the get on the air, operate, get as many people in front of the radio as possible and have fun.

We will operate for 24 hours from 1100 local time Saturday to 1100 local time Sunday as long as we have operators and the bands cooperate.

The ARRL Day Locator has been updated. A press release has been sent to *The Reporter* for publication.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51pm.

Intentionally submitted—Jerry Olive KD6WKY

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**Financial Report for June 2009**

General Fund	\$881.99
Repeater Fund	756.00
Prize Fund	152.00
ARRL	0.00
Project Fund	0.00

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Ending Balance \$1,789.99

## Behind Enemy Lines: An Amateur Radio Operator's Amazing Tale of Bravery

By Reg Hardman, VK4XH, and Carmody Sagers, KD5ZON

"The coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal and Guadalcanal saved the South Pacific." — Admiral "Bull" Halsey, US Navy, 1942

Sixty-six years ago on February 9, 1943, the United States announced the ultimate defeat of Japanese forces in the hard fought battle of Guadalcanal in the South Pacific.<sup>1</sup> The news spread rapidly and soon had everybody talking. What is not so well-known is the major contribution of ham radio operators within the Coastwatchers organization that helped make that victory possible. In this article, we will follow the life of one such ham radio operator, Paul Mason, STO, who was very much involved with this action.

Paul was born in Sydney, Australia, attended school there and became interested in radio, where he was largely self-taught. We know that as a young man he was proficient in Morse code, repaired his own equipment and wound his own coils. In fact, his diary tells us that he made his first transmitter in 1936. Before the commencement of World War II in Europe, he spent 20 years in the Solomon Islands as manager of the Inus plantation, which gave him a great understanding of the layout of these islands and the culture of its people.

### Preparing for War

With WWII commencing in Europe in 1939, it would be probable that German raiders would again (as in WWI) be frequenting the Pacific and Indian oceans. Australia, with a huge land-mass and small population, recognized that it would be most important to monitor ship and aircraft activities in the northern islands to warn of such approaching dangers. Consequently, in 1940, the Coastwatcher concept was born and was supervised by Lt Commander Eric Feldt (Naval Intelligence Australian Navy) covering a huge area, much of which makes up Indonesia and Melanesia today.

The arrival of WWII in the South Pacific found Paul Mason as a short, unassuming man with glasses in his early 40s, whose looks suggested he would be more at home in a bank or insurance office. With the unfolding of future events it was soon discovered nothing could be further from the truth

Consequently Mason, with his ham radio experience and radio knowledge, was recruited as an unpaid civilian by Lt Feldt and assigned to the Kieta area (near his plantation) where he positioned himself on a high ridge in order to observe movements from many directions.

### THE VVRC WELCOMES YOU

The Repeater is Published by the Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143, An ARRL Affiliated Club. Founded 1987, Chartered 1988 General Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM 420 Vine Street Fire Station.

**Wheelchair accessible**

### The Japanese Occupation Begins

Flushed with success after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the capture of Singapore and Indonesia, it wasn't long before the Japanese armed forces spread out to the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal. Mason was then given the call sign STO (the first three letters of his sister's married name of Stokie). He then moved to a better lookout at Malabita Hill where he could observe the Shortland Islands, Fauro Island and the Bougainville area, which was used by the Japanese navy to assemble naval groups. Sometime later his call sign was changed to LQK for security reasons.

Mason successfully reported Japanese naval activity by radio to the base in Port Morseby, which resulted in the bombing of enemy ships. The Japanese intelligence, feeling the effects of these bombings, became aware that there was a coastwatcher in the area and sent out a party to find him at Malabita Hill.

The enemy search party was kept under observation by Mason's loyal Solomon Islanders as he retreated further in the bush. Being unsuccessful in finding Mason, the Japanese search party finally left Malabita Hill whereupon Mason again took up residence. You have to understand that moving radio equipment around in those days was extremely difficult (Paul's diary said it took six men) with a heavy chassis, breakable valves (tubes), heavy lead-acid batteries with even heavier generators and benzene to keep the batteries charged. Compounding those problems in the operation of this radio equipment were noisy generators, high temperatures and humidity (never a good combination) and an environment of tropical diseases like malaria and beri beri, all of which made life very difficult.

With Mason being at the south end of the island and another coastwatcher called Read (call sign JER) at the northern end of the Island, they had most of the bases covered for visuals of shipping/aircraft activity in that area.

### Morse Messages Turn the Tide

Eventually Paul got his big break when he saw a formation of Japanese aircraft heading towards Tulagi and Guadalcanal and radioed the following famous message — which could be the most important message ever sent by a radio ham:

FROM STO, TWENTY-FOUR TORPEDO BOMBERS HEADED YOURS

A few hours earlier, US forces had landed at Tulagi and Gua-

Visit the Repeater online courtesy of Bob K6HEW at:  
<http://users.cwnet.com/hewbob/vvrc>  
 Club repeater in Vacaville:W6VVR 145.470 MHz(-) pl 127.3

The W6VVR net call is Tuesday evenings at 7pm on the club repeater. All are invited to participate in this weekly meeting on the air. 73!

Additional local repeaters

WV6F 224.200(-) WV6F 440.025(+)

W6BRA Repeater 224.540 MHz, PL 118.8 Hz, net call Wednesday evenings at 7pm except for club meeting nights.

dalcanal and were in the midst of unloading their human and equipment cargo. If the landing marines were caught unprepared in the middle of this process the carnage and destruction would have been terrible. Now with time up their sleeve (2 hours), the US naval forces went into battle station mode while fighter aircraft from the aircraft carriers climbed to 27,000 feet, ready to pounce on the oncoming enemy. With the surprise element now reversed, the ensuing dogfight became very much one sided with all but one Japanese bomber being destroyed. More importantly, no US ships were damaged or lost. It was truly a great victory for Allied radio intelligence.

The next day, Read, in the north of the Island, sighted 45 dive bombers heading southeast and radioed the following message:

FROM JER, FORTY FIVE DIVE BOMBERS GOING SOUTH EAST

Two hours later, Mason and Read tuned into the frequency of the US aircraft carrier and heard a commentary of the battle by the carrier's radio operator:

WOW WHAT A SIGHT ENEMY AIRCRAFT ARE BEING SHOT DOWN LIKE FLIES

Can you imagine the morale booster for Read and Mason in getting immediate feedback for their efforts? Again, the same afternoon and the next day, Mason reported over his radio more enemy planes, which were dealt with in a similar way — complete with commentary. It was clear that the Japanese strategy had been to allow the US forces to land, then surprise and catch them while doing so, thus inflicting a major American defeat. Radio messages from Mason and Read reversed this strategy.

In August 1942, Mason radioed to base evidence of an airfield being built at Buin. He had some of his Solomon Islanders mix with the workers on the up-and-coming airfield and sent the following message to Townsville, Australia:

Our scouts being employed at Kahilli state aerodrome is expected to be completed in a week's time. Many hundreds of natives being forced to work. — 27 lorries, 6 motor cars, 10 horses, 6 motor cycles, 4 tractors, aerodrome working equipment. Stores and fuel under tarpaulins along foreshore from mouth of Ugumo River to mouth of Moliko River. Two antiaircraft guns near mouth of Ugumo River and another such gun on N/W boundary of aerodrome. Wireless station on beach in front of aerodrome, also eight new iron buildings. Priests and nuns interned in iron buildings on beach. Enemy troops in green uniforms with anchor badge on arm and white hats. Scouts state 440 enemy troops. Weather too hazy to observe ships today.

What a complete report on enemy activity.

Mason and Read received regular supply drops by Catalina aircraft — usually on moonlit nights where they would light a signal fire upon hearing the engines.

#### Medals and Promotions

In early October 1942, General Douglas MacArthur awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to Lt Read and Petty Officer Mason and two other coastwatchers for their valuable contributions to the war effort. Around this time they were given a naval rank to provide supposedly some protection if captured (not likely)

and some income for their services.

By the end of October 1942, the Japanese were preparing for an all-out attack on Guadalcanal and realized that they had to get rid of the coastwatchers once and for all if they were going to be successful. They consequently brought in a large number of tracker dogs in addition to 100 troops in Buin to track them down. Mason then arranged for a Catalina to bomb Buin and successfully killed off all the dogs in their cages — much to his relief.

Around this time Paul Mason demonstrated his superb knowledge of the culture of the Solomon Islanders. An important village had indicated some leaning towards the Japanese invaders. Wishing to keep the village on the Allied side, he made his point by marching into the village with a few loyal natives and singled out the tull tull (tell tell) man (the village interpreter, a type of second in charge to the chief).<sup>2</sup>

He explained to the villagers that he was symbolically humiliating the entire village by tanning the tull tull man's backside with a lump of wood for their indiscretions — then proceeded to do so. To reinforce his authority he also arranged for a Catalina to drop a bomb close by without causing any damage. He had no more trouble with that village staying on his side.

#### Coastwatcher Message Defeats the Japanese Armada

Then commenced a major escalation of enemy activity. A big naval buildup was in force, requiring Mason to radio in twice a day, indicating an imminent attack on Guadalcanal.

One report, with the aid of pages from *Jane's Fighting Ships*, was as follows:

At least 61 ships this area viz 2 Nati, 1 Aoba, 1 Mogami, 1 Kiso, 1 Tatuta, 2 sloops, 33 destroyers, 17 cargo, 2 tankers, 1 8000 ton passenger liner.

Read had also radioed in a similar buildup in his area in the north.

On November 10, 1942 the Japanese armada launched itself toward Guadalcanal but was surprised by four US cruisers under the command of Admiral Callaghan. In the ensuing battle Admiral Callaghan was killed and one American cruiser was lost but the Japanese fleet suffered a major defeat. Dive bombers from Henderson field on Guadalcanal, together with Admiral Lee's battleships, finished off the Japanese Armada, thus ending Japanese hopes of resupplying their troops and taking Guadalcanal.

#### A Desperate Escape

Japanese activity increased greatly now with the sole intent of finding Paul Mason. He was instructed from base to dodge the numerous patrols looking for him, avoid the enemy-friendly natives and join Read in the north of the island, over 100 miles away through thick mountainous jungle, for pickup by submarine — a very difficult job indeed. With the tell-tale footprints of Japanese patrols everywhere (the big toe and other toes are

separated) Mason ditched all his heavy radio equipment and headed west to climb the 5000 foot mountain range with his loyal group of police boys. Because of the mountainous region, getting supplies by air was now out of the question and continuously dodging enemy patrols was a real problem.

After many days of walking, Mason developed a festering sore on his foot. He removed his boot and as he removed his sock, to his horror, skin and flesh came away with it. Mason rested up for 2 days to gather his strength. Moving on with several more days of walking, Mason met up with Read for the first time in person and rested up at his camp for 2 weeks. The relentless Japanese pursuit made life very difficult where they were engaged in regular exchanges (almost daily) where some Japanese and some police boys were killed. Enemy patrols would allow themselves to be seen with few or no weapons with the view to draw fire from Mason and his men and expose their position. They always tried to avoid such situations.

While at Read's they were then instructed to go to a coast-watcher called Keenan for disembarkation, which required them to climb a 5000 foot limestone range. The temperature was freezing at night and they had to light fires to keep warm. Travelling by night required Mason to use his luminous compass and he and his companions attached luminous fungus to their backs so they could follow the person in front of them.

Four nights later after arriving at Keenan's camp (no food for the last 33 hours), the American submarine USS *Guardfish* (SS-

217) picked up a ragtag bunch of coastwatchers, police boys, Chinese, shot down pilots — totaling 59 (originally going to be 14). Finally USS *Guardfish* was able to transfer their human cargo to USS *Subchaser* SC-761 and then Guadalcanal — to fight another day.

**The Kennedy Connection**

As a final note, it was a coastwatcher called Reg Evans who rescued Jack Kennedy (ultimately to become President of the United States) and his crew after their PT boat was destroyed. Coastwatchers were truly a unique breed with ham radio operator Paul Mason being the best known, because of his bravery, reliability and ability in keeping his radio operating under most difficult conditions.

*Reg Hardman, VK4XH, an ARRL member, has been a licensed ham for just over 50 years operating from Brisbane, Australia.*

*Carmody Sagers, KD5ZON, is a senior in high school. She is planning on attending Brigham Young University. Carmody received her Amateur Radio license in 2003, along with her mom. Carmody's dad Richard, W7YC, an ARRL member, has been a ham for 42 years and she basically has grown up with ham radio. Her father also taught Carmody Morse code when she was in second grade so they could pass secret messages at the dinner table.*



PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB, INC.  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Please Print & Fill in Completely

Dues are delinquent January 1st

Name: _____ Call Sign _____	MEMBER Dues -----\$15.00 _____
Street: _____	Each Family Member ---\$ 2.00 _____
City: _____ Zip: _____	Student -----\$ 5.00 _____
Phone: (_____) _____ - _____ OK to Publish ?(_____) _____	Repeater/Autopatch donation--- _____
License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____) _____	Call/Name badge -----\$10.00 _____
E-Mail Address _____	Optional ARRL membership
<b>FAMILY Member (Spouse or Children)</b>	ARRL dues-----\$37.00 _____
Name: _____ Call Sign _____	ARRL dues (Senior) -----\$34.00 _____
License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____) _____	Senior is 65 yr or older with one time proof on age.
Name: _____ Call Sign _____	Total----- _____
License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____) _____	Paid by CASH: _____ Check # _____

Mail to : Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143