



SIERA News



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THE PONIES

It's a grand part of history and our heritage. A feat unparalleled in the annals of time!

Almost 2000 miles of unfriendly terrain, weather that could change in a moment, coming across an "unknown" at any time, and outposts that might not even be there on your return. This was the challenge of the Pony Express. The motivation was political and the result was financial disaster. Night and day, for eighteen months, the grueling routine continued, riders passing in the night with hardly time to wave as they went their opposite ways. Ah, those were the days...when mere boys became mighty men, and the letter cost \$5 to ride in the mochilla.

We just celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Pony Express with the annual re-ride. For almost 30 years SIERA has offered radio assistance to the Nevada Pony Express Association...keeping track of the pony progress and constantly updating the hotline so all would know whether to sleep in or get moving because the pony is ahead of schedule. It's an irony that amateur radio has, as its basis, Morse Code – the same

method of communication sent over the telegraph lines in 1861, which put the ponies out to pasture. Now, here we are; amateur radio being of health and welfare assistance to the riders. Would you say, "Turn about is fair play."

SIERA participants did a "first class" job of keeping track, posting updates and riding right along with the red shirts. Sincere thanks to Will (KD7NIR) for doing a masterful job of organization and going without sleep for some three days!

A grand salute for a job well done to all the SIERA members giving so willingly of their time and radio talents...the unsung heroes.

Which, speaking of unsung heroes, brings thanks to David (KC6VRN) for locating, carrying and placing the nearly forgotten SIERA plaque in the Genoa Museum for all to see.

To all...your service and volunteerism is greatly appreciated. You do your hobby proud!

PORTABILITY

As time moves along, more and more served agencies become aware of the high value of the

ham radio operator. This may come in the form of the Red Cross, Salvation Army, local hospital or other entities. Preparedness is essential for us to be able to quickly respond, show we know what we're doing and create value to that agency. At one time, not long ago, we thought being prepared meant jumping in the car, going to the scene and passing information. Wait a minute! That didn't seem to work very well and nobody was quick to call us out. Time has been a fine teacher and we are far better prepared today in our understanding of our communications role. The many facets of "Preparedness" have been passed to us and knowledge makes for improvement. One area many of us learn on our own is the accomplishment for portability. It's not easy to carry around a fair sized radio, a power supply, generator-inverter, a 100Ah battery, a long extension cord, all the necessary extra cables and other goodies. It's one thing to have all that in your vehicle and quite another to be able to offer the flexibility of moving around, inside your vehicle and outside. Sure, a HT will sometimes work, but not always. In fact, not mostly. So 50W is our optimum.

For many, portability has been an individual learning process. Initially, I put a small Yaesu in a tackle box. Making up several wiring harnesses, bringing plenty of extra connectors and all kinds of appurtenant equipment, I was set to go. Well, not quite! Still had to figure out a decent antenna rig and, of course, there was that heavy battery. Always that heavy battery.

Time marches on. Going through several iterations of improvement, I've reached the point of having that 50W radio mounted on a small cutting board (right out of the kitchen, with a roll of the eyes from my wife).

Carrying that rig in a cloth bag is easy and I have room for a couple extension cables and a connector or two. The Cubex antenna, plus the 20' mast and the ability to mount it in the hitch receiver is cumbersome and, while sometimes it's a necessary evil, I've found a decent magmount will work very well most of the time and you can almost always find a piece of metal to set it on. Still, there was that heavy battery.

A bit of evaluation of AGM (glass mat sealed batteries) brought me to the point of purchasing a 24Ah unit. Nothing like the weight of a regular battery, of course, but not desirable for hand carrying into the field either.

Recently, a 2# 5Ah AGM was

purchased. It's about a 3" cube. The only problem was to determine how long this thing might last on a field trip, while using my 50W mobile. So, making sure I had the larger AGM along as backup, I was off to my assignment at Homewood for AMBBR. Being able to communicate with Control from Homewood with a HT was very doable, but I wanted to use the mobile at full power for the six hour stint. At start time, the meter indicated 12.95V. The rig was used for the normal TX- RX communications during the six hours. Actually, it got greater usage since there were three of us in a learning experience. When released from station a quick meter check showed 12.4V on that little battery. Experience suggests that 11.5V should be the minimum accepted for decent radio operation and not damage the battery. This kind of service, tied to reasonably normal radio use with a fully charged relatively new battery, would seem to extrapolate to something in the neighborhood of a 12 hour day. If able to reduce power to, say 10W, you'd have a comfort zone that says you can operate all day with that rig. The total weight is such that moving around is not a back breaker. It's also easy to imagine that the total package could be secured in a backpack (using the metal body of the transceiver as a magmount placement), giving flexibility not normally associated with 50W communications

capability.

The portability afforded to ham radio operators gets better all the time. The experience can be enhanced through use of Anderson PowerPole connections. Power Poles make it very easy to switch power sources. You can be using your car cigar lighter plug one minute and a battery the next minute, going to a second battery in the same minute. PowerPoles are an inexpensive investment offering the operator multiple options. I keep two or three extension cables handy (PowerPole on both ends) and can use them for power extenders or for setting up a remote speaker (with the proper speaker plug, of course).

Portability greatly enhances the flexibility of the radio operator. Many times it also provides a "Wow factor" with the served agency.

How's your portability?

2010 CALENDAR

July 3	– Meeting 1pm
July 10	– DEATH RIDE
July 23	– DR Dinner
July 24	– Social Bkfst
Aug 7	– Meeting 1pm
Aug 28	– Social Bkfst
Sept 4	– Meeting 1pm
Sept 12	– Tour de Tahoe
Sept 25	– Social Bkfst