



# SIERA BEACON



Carson Valley, NV

October 2020

*"HAM radio is not a hobby. It's a way of life." - Carlos Beltran, XE1MW*

## Ham operator goes Pony

Recently, Ken Head, KE6FTM, our friend from Placeville, CA, took part in a Pony Express Campout with the Shellbourne Riders in eastern Nevada. As you can see in the photo, Ken is not afraid of outland adventures. During the 2016 Pony when this photo was taken, it snowed and created a mucky mess for all concerned. Ken actually cleaned off several pounds of mud from his Jeep, including his antenna, before this photo was taken. He had helped drag a jack-knifed truck and trailer out of the mud at the bottom of Overland Pass West and saved a lot of people from danger. When COVID cancelled this year's Pony, many participants refused to receive the pins unless they actually earned them. So, the Shellbourne Riders organized a ride and campout just for this purpose. Ken couldn't resist the adventure. Here's his story:



I just got back from the Nevada XP Overland Pass ride and campout with two friends from California XP. We arrived on the 17th one day early at 11:00 pm. on the east side of Overland pass east of Eureka at junction of 892 and the XP Trail, 42 miles North of Hwy 50.

On the 18th, eight vehicles and fourteen riders started to arrive at noon. It was too windy for a camp fire, so we grilled on gas bbq's and turned in early. At 3:00 am., Geno's horse chewed through the rope and went for a walk around camp. He got the horse retied and went back to bed.

Next morning, we got up at around 7:30. Tony and I made coffee and thawed out the crew. No continental breakfast this morning. We discussed using bungee cords to tie up horses. Then everyone got into full uniform for taking pictures and giving out 2020 rider pins and Shellbourne and XP rider patches.

Doc Cristenson was presented his 40-year patch. I was supposed to ride the whole four miles (on horseback), but was asked to ride an A.T.V. carrying rider supplies and water.

We reached the summit after a little over two hours and four rest stops for the horses. Beautiful views at the top of Overland Pass West. We spotted a cross at the summit of a Silent Key Bob Evans N6YMA. With SIERA's blessing, next June I will bring a can of paint, masking tape and Braso to clean up the plaque. It's not in too bad of shape. The plaque is pretty tarnished.

After a few pictures, riders mounted and started the descent. At about two miles, one of the two ladies that followed me from California said her back was hurting her, so she asked for the ATV. At that point, I was wishing I was on a horse. So I got on Rojo, the red horse, and rode back into the Dixie valley. Back in camp around a small warming fire, my XP family gave me a thumbs up. I am now an official Pony Express Rider with a Shellbourne Rider endorsement patch. Wow! Overwhelming!

To all the Ham Operators that work the Pony, know you are very much appreciated. Many riders feel we are their lifeline. At that point the California girls made pancakes and sausage and leftover fried chicken. After breakfast, we all packed up and headed our separate ways. Got home at 11:20 with a stop at Middle Gate Station. The fun part was checking in on the XP Zoom meeting while having dinner.



### **About Bob Evans and the Cross**

Bob Evans N6YMA was a very active member of SIERA from about 1994 to about 2005 when he moved back to Santa Clara. He lost his computer job after the DotCom crash and had to return to the Bay Area to find work. Shortly afterward, though, he discovered he had cancer and died in 2007.



Brad Smith WT6B remembers Bob as working hard for SIERA and the Pony Express. His favorite place to help the Pony was as the relay operator on Overland Pass West. He'd chased the Mormon crickets away from a spot on the pass, through out his sleeping bag, and hang out. Brad figures he was the first ham to work the pass for the Pony, thus the cross which SIERA placed in honor of his work. Anybody who has worked Overland Pass West know how cold, drizzly and uncomfortable a night on that pass can be.

Bob loved motorcycles and as his "last hurrah," he went on a long ride with his son across the country. After he and his wife, Merrily, moved to Santa Clara, he kept in touch with his SIERA friends, riding up on his motorcycle to visit, even after he was diagnosed. He never complained, but he was obviously in pain when he arrived to stay with Brad and Linda. He'd greet them with "I need a hug." After 2006, Brad says he just "faded away."

Don McRoberts W3DRM remembers Bob Evans as a nice, quiet kind of guy. He was a member of the Carson Valley Radio Club (CVRC), of which Don was a member, before joining SIERA. The two clubs did not get along with each other due to major differences of opinions about amateur radio activities and operations. However, many of the local hams were members of both clubs anyway.

Don dug up a few emails between Bob and Will Lewis KD7NIR that described in gruesome detail the struggle Bob endured from the cancer that ultimately took his life. His wife, Merrily, finally had to inform Will of Bob's death:

"To friends of Bob Evans,

Merrily Evans called us this afternoon with bad news that we have been expecting for a while. Bob became a Silent Key late last night. His children were all there - including his daughter who lives in Canada, and of course Merrily.

Bob had been very weak and was in considerable pain for a long time. He has gone on to a better life, but we shall all remember his enthusiasm, his generous heart, and his incredible personality."

Jamie Dahl found the link below to a 2007 Silent Key article in the SIERA newsletter. In it, Bob is described as a mentor and supporter of hams everywhere, teaching classes and helping them learn to enjoy the hobby to the fullest.

<http://www.cvhams.com/newsletters/2007-02-02.pdf>

Unfortunately, there were few newsletters or personal memories of how the cross was placed at Overland Pass West. That alone must have been quite a trek and a good story. If anyone knows anything at all about it, please contact the Beacon.

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**The General meeting 1 p.m. October 3rd on the NV7CV repeater 147.330/240MHz. Board meeting at noon.**

During September's general meeting, Jim Sanders AG6IF discussed the two rescues in which SIERA hams helped with communications. He used an app on his laptop, Audacity, to record the conversations he had with Eric Bero KI7WHH and the Highway Patrol during the rescue on Monitor Pass.

Paul Gulbro added some important information for anyone working a similar rescue effort. "Treat each transmission as the last one because batteries may die before you're finished. Get these three pieces of information:"

1. Location of emergency
2. Number of persons involved
3. Nature of the emergency

If you have trouble finding the coordinates of the location on your cell phone, police can trace the location from your last transmission. But most importantly, get those three bits of information so that 911 can know what kind of response they need to make. For many more details about this rescue, read the Minutes at the end of this Beacon.

Here's a link Jim Sanders shared on the SIERA Facebook page from Amateur Radio News about the local hams who assisted in the two rescues:  
[https://www.arnewline.org/news/2020/9/10/amateur-radio-newsline-report-2237-for-friday-september-11-2020?fbclid=IwAR3SfJ2qQ3Lr2h1S\\_1mRYazMKEVXm-10vFLA5t8BGqF7nc0eOHVWz1DouOY](https://www.arnewline.org/news/2020/9/10/amateur-radio-newsline-report-2237-for-friday-september-11-2020?fbclid=IwAR3SfJ2qQ3Lr2h1S_1mRYazMKEVXm-10vFLA5t8BGqF7nc0eOHVWz1DouOY)

## **New Repeater Installed**

On Saturday the 26th, Jeff Brown K5BLS replaced the 147.270 with a new repeater system. It now has three separate receivers online, with a 4th in the wings, located at McClellan Peak in Carson, East Peak above Heavenly Lake Tahoe, and on Leviathan across the California Nevada border near southern Douglas County. Coverage has been dramatically increased as has the transmit power to the region from the 270. The repeater now can be used in Reno all the way to the California border along 395. There is handheld coverage around most of the same areas including some parts of Dayton.

It can be linked as needed to the UHF 442.900 repeater at the same location, 442.300 in lake Tahoe, and the 147.345/442.225 repeaters on Eagle Ridge near Fernley. Of course TARA has been given permission link to us as needed also from any of their sites.

The 443.750 in Minden will be linked to the .270 sometime over the winter, and the backup 147.270 Motorola repeater will be operational once the tower work is completed by the county, whenever that funding becomes available. The 147.270 simulcast transmitter at Leviathan will be installed next summer so that locations in TRE will be useable on an HT if they aren't already.

There are still some small details to be worked on with the voting as it must be aligned end-to-end, meaning two people, one at each site, making adjustments to function properly. Until that is accomplished, some small hiccups in audio may occur. Jeff will get to this as he has time and resources to accomplish.



Check out .270 on your HT when you have a chance and see how well it may work for you. Jeff has been surprised where he can use the .270 machine now since the installation was accomplished.

Special thanks to John Abrott KD7NHC for his assistance Saturday in accomplishing this large job. It only took nine hours to remove all the old stuff and completely re install the new systems.

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### **Ham Swap Meet**

Saturday October 17th, 2020 Robbers Roost Start 8:00am at the latest. Ham Radio, Shortwave Radio, CB radio, Scanner receivers, antennas, etc. The owners of Robbers Roost are hosting this. IMPORTANT: If they have enough participation, they will consider doing it every month! We need participation, sellers, buyers, traders, observers, etc. Robbers Roost is 49901 HWY 14, south of intersection of Hwy 395 and Hwy 14. 395 cuts southwest toward Ridgecrest. Continue south on Hwy 14 until you reach Robber's Roost ghost town. This swap meet is held in conjunction with the Run With the Burros event.

**A new user guide** has just been completed for users of *Log Book of the World*. Hams have complained for years how cumbersome LOTW was to set up. For those that might like to subscribe to LOTW (Free), this guide might help them get started. The link to the guide is: [g4ifb.com/LoTW\\_New\\_User\\_Guide.pdf](http://g4ifb.com/LoTW_New_User_Guide.pdf) -- Jim Marshall K6LR

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Below is an article from NASA about Solar Cycles submitted by Bill Holmes K7DUY:  
<https://www.inverse.com/science/solar-cycle-25-nasa-explains>

### **The Sun's 25th cycle is here.**

Every 11 years, the Sun begins a new solar cycle, marked by periods of violent eruptions and magnetic explosions that send flashes of radiation into space.

The new solar cycle began in December 2019. On Tuesday, NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced it will be similar to the last cycle. Considered relatively calm, that cycle included the weakest solar maximum since 1928.

Calm or not, the new solar cycle will still impact life on Earth as well as future space voyages.

This is Solar Cycle 25 because the numbering of cycles began in 1755. Although it began in December 2019, it takes up to 10 months for scientists to determine when the new cycle *actually* began since the Sun is a variable star.

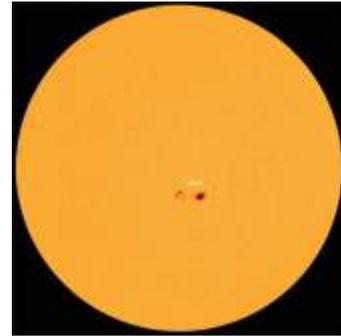
“As we emerge from solar minimum and approach Cycle 25’s maximum, it is important to remember solar activity never stops; it changes form as the pendulum swings,” Lika

Guhathakurta, a solar scientist at the Heliophysics Division at NASA Headquarters in Washington, said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

The Solar Cycle 25 Prediction Panel, an international team of experts on the Sun, agreed that the next solar cycle will be similar to the last one. This may mean the end of a weakening solar cycle trend, with each cycle exhibiting less activity than the one before it.

For the past 50 years, around four solar cycles or so, the Sun has been unusually active. The year 2019 saw an **unusually low number of sunspots**, with a total of 281 days where there were no sunspots on the Sun.

This caused some speculation, and a bit of panic, that the Sun would undergo another Maunder minimum, a period between 1645 and 1715 where reduced activity was paired with a severe drop in temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere. However, the team of experts is hopeful about cycle 25.



"It's hard to pin down a specific date, but we predict that the middle of 2025 is when we'll have the most sunspots of this cycle," Gordon Petrie, a researcher at the National Science Foundation's National Solar Observatory, and member of the Prediction Panel, explained during the press briefing.

"We expect there to be approximately 115 sunspots at the maximum, which is very close to what we saw during the previous cycle, which maxed out at 120 sunspots," he added.

"This is what tells me that this might be the beginning of a return to stronger solar cycles and break from ever-shrinking ones we have seen the past few decades."

### **What is a solar cycle?**

Solar activity largely depends on the Sun's magnetic field. The Sun's magnetic field goes through a periodic cycle in which the south and north poles essentially switch spots, and it takes another 11 years or so for them to switch back.

The solar cycle is measured by changes in the Sun's activity. The Sun periodically ejects boiling-hot plasma, in the form of solar flares and solar wind, across the Solar System.

The Sun's activity starts increasing halfway through the cycle, meaning more solar flareups and outflow of radiation from our host star. As the solar cycle winds down, the Sun becomes less active.

Its activity meanwhile is measured by its sunspots — dark spots that mark the Sun's surface. Sunspots are caused by the magnetic field inhibiting the transfer of energy on the surface of the Sun through the process of convection, where hot fluid rises and cooler fluid sinks.

Sunspots are, in turn, an indication of solar activity. As the Sun reaches its 'solar maximum,' the most amount of sunspots can be seen across its surface. When the solar

cycle comes to an end, there are fewer and fewer sunspots, a period known as 'solar minimum.'

### **How does the Sun affect space weather?**

Space weather is controlled by the flare-ups of the Sun that are ejected into outer space. The Solar Cycle 25 Prediction Panel notes that just because it is a relatively calm solar cycle, doesn't mean we should not expect to see a few flare-ups of solar activity as the cycle heats up.

The Sun is an active star, periodically subject to events like coronal mass ejections, high-speed solar wind, and solar flares. Solar flares are seen as bright areas on the Sun — they're an intense burst of radiation, linked to magnetic energy associated with sunspots. These ejections can cause magnetic storms in the Earth's upper atmosphere, which can affect power grids, satellites, and orbiting spacecraft and astronauts.

NASA and NOAA have been working together to enhance predictions of space weather, and improve our preparedness for it. "There is no bad weather, just bad preparation," Jacob Bleacher, chief scientist for NASA's Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate at the agency's Headquarters, said at the press briefing. "Space weather is what it is, our job is to prepare."

As NASA prepares to return humans to the Moon through its upcoming Artemis mission, it has become more crucial to mitigate the effects of space weather and radiation on astronauts during longer spaceflights. To prepare, the space agency has sent out missions to the Sun, like the Solar Orbiter, to better understand solar activity, and be able to better predict it in the future.

Meanwhile, NOAA runs the Space Weather Prediction Center in Boulder, Colorado, which monitors the Sun and forecasts its activity. "Just as NOAA's National Weather Service makes us a weather-ready nation, what we're driving to be is a space weather-ready nation," Elsayed Talaat, director of Office of Projects, Planning, and Analysis for NOAA's Satellite and Information Service, said during the briefing.

The next solar maximum is predicted for July 2025. Scientists are eager for the opportunity the maximum will allow for further study of the Sun. "We hope that an eclipse close to solar maximum will not only show us an awe-inspiring corona but also some big, interesting sunspots on the face of the Sun to help us learn about living inside the atmosphere of an active star and the space weather it creates," Valentin Martinez Pillet, director of the National Solar Observatory, said during the press briefing.

### **Nets Available in Carson Valley and Beyond:**



**The SNARS Noon Net** daily on 147.150.

**Daily Carson & Eagle Valley net**, 6 p.m. on 28.435 MHz USB

**BARC Nightly Net**, 8 pm on 146.655 pl 131.8, ragchew and pre-check-in at 7:30 p.m.

**DCART Net**, Mondays at 6:30 p.m. on the following schedule:

The first two Mondays on 147.330 linked with 147.240.

The third Monday is Tahoe Basin ARES on 147.240 to be linked with 147.330.

The fourth (and fifth) Monday(s) on 147.270 to be linked with 147.240

**TARA Net**, Mondays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.240.

**SIERA VHF Net**, Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330.

**SIERA HF Net**, Tuesdays at 8 p.m. on 3982kHz.

**Plumas County Net**, Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., on 145.470.

**CARS Fusion Net**, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. The local FUSION repeater is at 442.300.

**Brad Smith's (WT6B) Watering Hole**, Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330,

"questions and answers pertaining to amateur radio."

**SKYWARN** at 7 p.m. Wednesdays.

**NV ARES Net** Thursdays at 7 p.m. Echolink conf server NV-GATE 152566 IRLP Western Reflector Ch8:9258

**SNARS Hospital Net**, Fridays at 10:00 a.m. on 147.030 or 147.150

(SNARS Linked Repeaters: <https://snars.org>)

**RARA Rural Amateur Radio Assn.**, Fridays at 8 p.m. on 147.180 pl 123

**ARES HF Net**, Saturdays at 7 a.m. on 3965kHz (+or - QRM).

**RARA**, Rural Amateur Radio Association, Saturdays 7:30 a.m. on 3965kHz

**New Hams Net**, Sundays at 1 p.m. 146.760 pl 123

**National Traffic Service Net**, Sundays at 6:15 p.m. on 3945kHz

## **The Watering Hole**

Brad Smith WT6B holds **The Watering Hole** every Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., on 147.33/24MHz. Lots of hams, both new and old, check in, asking intriguing questions, and pooling SIERA's vast amateur radio experience to solve their radio problems. It's a fun, and sometimes chaotic, half-hour even if you just want to listen to the chat. Did you know there's over 1000 years of combined radio knowledge among SIERA members? Tune in and take advantage of all that information.

## **License Testing Still Available**

In these COVID days, you can study AND take your exams online at [hamstudy.org](http://hamstudy.org).

**OR** Greg Moore KG7D may be able to arrange a private exam for you. Just send him an email: [Kg7d@arrl.net](mailto:Kg7d@arrl.net).

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## **SIERA General Meeting September 5, 2020**

*Due to the COVID-19 Virus outbreak, and exercising an abundance of caution, and following recommendations from the CDC and the State of Nevada the Board meeting was held utilizing the NV7CV, SIERA 2 meter repeater.*

**Call to order** 1:00PM

Nineteen check-in acknowledged.

### **Treasurer's Report for September 2020**

The detailed Treasurer's report was presented to the Board and approved by email.

### **NEW Business**

Two emergency situations were handled by the NV7CV repeater in the past week. Sue Cauhape KI7CTT published the account in *The Beacon* and sent a copy to the *Record-Courier* that was published in their 9/3/2020 edition. Jim Sanders AG6IF recorded the transmissions from the repeater and they are presently available on the SIERA webpage and the audio was emailed to the club membership. Rick Olson KM6DYL reported that since he works from home, he is able to monitor the repeater often during the day from his office/radio shack. He related that the calls for help from

Tom Foss, K6ICE, were scratchy and hard to copy but with Jim's help the critical information was able to be collected.

Jim shared that he has several radios running simultaneously positioned in a place where they are easily accessible. Both Rick KM6DYL and Jim AG6IF shared that being able to access GPS coordinates from a Smart Phone can be very helpful in an emergency. Jim also related that he has audio available on his YouTube page from an earlier emergency that he participated in. Rick, KM6DYL, and Ryan Olson, KM6DYO, were active participants in the communications emergency.

Bob Yandow K7GUU asked how Tom knew what frequency to use. Jim answered that Tom is a member of the Lyon County ARES so he would most likely have most of the area repeaters programmed into his radio.

Chuck Gervie KI7PGI asked how it is possible to get Lat/Lon information from a smart phone. Rick related how they tried to get Tom's location from his phone. Ryan tried to explain how to turn the phone's location service on – but was unsuccessful as not all phones are the same.

AG6IF pointed out that knowing how to access the “reverse” function on your radio can be very helpful in an emergency. Paul Gulbro WA6EWV pointed out that the GPS info in the phone is derived from cell tower triangulation. So a cell connection is necessary. Law Enforcement, however, is capable of accessing the pinged information gathered from before the signal was lost. Amateurs should be aware that establishing the location of the emergency is of paramount importance, then a name or call, and then the nature of the emergency. Every transmission from the station requesting help should be treated like it is their last transmission.

Jim related that establishing the location of this emergency was complicated. Using only place names was not helpful for him because he has not lived in the area for very long. Rick was very helpful in being able to establish the location.

Chuck asked how Jim was able to capture the audio from his radio. Jim related that he uses the free program, “Audacity,” to record the audio in his shack. His default setting is to connect through the computer to his VHF radio in the shack. So he just turned up the volume on the radio. The file can be manipulated to easily share the file. Tom Tabacco, KE7NCJ, added that there are many Apps for Android that allow access to GPS location information.

Bob, K7GUU, said that he looks up repeater locations before heading out. He asked if there is a better way to program his radio to be able to access repeaters in a particular area. Jim AG6IF answered that he uses “Chirp” to program his radio. His radio has over a thousand memory locations available for programming. With “Chirp,” it is then possible to program all repeaters in a geographic or political demarcation. Then the scan function can be used to establish activity. Also, APRS can be a handy tool to use to establish your geographic location as it will beacon out your lat/lon position.

Jim offered a reminder that the audio files for the emergency event are available on the SIERA website and additional details are available in the September *SIERA Beacon*. Jim also reported that he sent a link to the RC article to Christian Cudnik, K0STH, who does work for “Amateur Radio Newsline” and hosts the podcast “100 Watts and a Wire.”

He also encouraged the membership to join in on Brad Smith's (WT6B) *Watering Hole*, Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330 repeater. Also he encouraged the

membership to participate in our Tuesday night SIERA Net at 7:30 p.m. on the repeater.

Finally, he encouraged the membership to be familiar with the operation of their cell phones - especially being able to access location information, to learn how to operate your radio in “reverse mode”, and operating APRS.

The ISS has a new radio onboard. If you want to work the International Space Station, the VHF/UHF Repeater Uplink is 145.99 (PL 67 Hz) and the Downlink is 437.80 .

**Adjournment** 1:47PM

**Remember, send your photos and news for the Beacon AND the SIERA Facebook page to: [scauhape2002@yahoo.co](mailto:scauhape2002@yahoo.co)**

