



Amateur Radio - - Lifeline Of The Airwaves

U.S. Navy Chief Frank Belden of Hayward, Calif., and Navy man Mike Krisman, seated, operate amateur radio equipment in the "ham shack" at Redwood Acres while Barry Burnside (standing) Naval Reservist of Hayward, Calif., takes messages for relay over an amateur network which covered California

Almost overlooked in the intensity of the recent flood disaster were a group of Navy and civilian amateur radio operators, all volunteers, who are at times the only communications link with the outside world and between rescue forces and the victims.

With the main local base set up in the dance hall at Redwood Acres, the "ham" network spread over most of California and Oregon, with more than 2,000 messages handled through Redwood Acres alone.

According to Mrs. Pat Britton, manager of Redwood Acres, the operators reportedly have been commended for the Presidential Citation by Dr. Jack Johnson of San Leandro, State Disaster Office medical officer.

and most of Oregon during the flood emergency. All, who served on a volunteer basis, are reported to have been recommended by Dr. Jack Johnson of San Leandro, Civil Defense medical officer, for the Presidential Citation ribbon.

With the operation due to close down today after the restoration of most key land communications, one man, Dean Rose of the Navy, is still in remote and isolated Pecwan on the Klamath River.

Mike Krisman, a Navy man from Kansas City, Kansas, was stationed at hard-hit Orleans, while another Navy man, David Morris of Allen Junction, West Virginia, was at Hoopa, also ravaged by the flood.

Civilians Included

Civilian volunteers as well as the military are included in the Presidential Citation recommendation, according to the report.

The ham operators handled calls for Civil Defense, on-the-spot weather reports for the Marine Corps and Army rescue and supply helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, Red Cross messages for food and clothing,

scores of calls for medicines from doctors in the stricken areas, health and welfare reports on communities and individuals, and countless others.

Most of the operators arrived here December 27, with Krisman starting the day of the flood at the Mill Valley Air Force Station in Marin County. All except one were Navy men, until about three days ago when two or three civilian operators joined the Redwood Acres base station.

Antennae were strung in the high bleachers and across the rodeo arena, and a requested emergency frequency of 3875 kilocycles was immediately assigned by the Federal Communications Commission. The base station here was given the call letters KENCG.

150 Operators

Upwards of 150 amateur operators throughout the two states were on the disaster network constantly throughout the emergency period, and many remain in service at the present time. Krisman said a number of transistorized and versatile portable radio units were loaned the group here by Sideland Engineers of San Francisco — a move which he said made operations much more complete and successful.

"We are deeply grateful and indebted to them", he said.

Official calls regarding the general safety and rescue operations were relayed direct to the Navy at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay.

Other operators at the local base included Verif Hajek, a civilian from San Francisco.