

County Hunter News

August 2007
Volume 3, Issue 8

Welcome to the On-Line County Hunter News, a monthly publication for those interested in county hunting, with an orientation toward CW operation.

Contributions of articles, stories, letters, and pictures to the editor are welcomed, and may be included in future issues at the editor's discretion.

The County Hunter News will attempt to provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, or provide news of upcoming events.

We hope you will enjoy the new County Hunter News. Feel free to forward, or provide links. Permission is given for copying or quoting in part or all provided credit is given to the CHNews and to the author of article.

County Hunter Nets run on 14.0565, 10.122.5, and **7056.5**, with activity nights on 3556.5 on Tuesday evenings around 8-9pm Eastern Time during the winter months. Also, with low sunspot activity, most of the SSB activity now is on 7185. The cw folks are now pioneering 17M on 18.080

You can see live spots of county hunter activity at ch.w6rk.com

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Notes from the Editor

1) **17M Pioneers** - The CW county hunters are breaking ground on a new band. Recently several mobiles, including W0QE, W0GXQ, AB7RW, W9MSE, and N9JF are running on 17 meters on 18.080 MHz. With the coming sunspot peak, this should be a valuable addition to the very busy 20M band at sunspot max. Resonators are available from Hustler, and of course, screwdriver antennas cover it easily. Some of the stations heard include WB4X, N5PR, K8CW, AA0IP, WB2ABD, W0QE, KB6TAL, WB4KZW, N4CD, K8ZZ, W9MSE, KB6UF and others being the '17M

Pioneers'! It's still a bit lonely on 17m, but with the County Challenge Award getting finalized by the MARAC board at the Denver meeting, there should be lots looking to 'up' their band-county totals. Who knows? – maybe the SSB folks will stake out a frequency there on 17M too, like the successful new 7185 KHz freq on 40M SSB.

2) Reader Feedback **from WB2ABD** - “Bob: your piece about switching power supplies didn't mention that fact that a good many of them put out some RF noise that could interfere with the radio. I ran into this issue with a TenTec 963, which puts out drifting spurs on 160M. A friend also has similar problems with an MFJ supply. I went to an Astron linear supply. Yes - it draws more power - no - it doesn't put out any junk. I shut it off when I'm not on the air. I'd guess a lot of guys who use the 963 didn't know it was dirty because they don't operate Top Band.”

De N4CD – No problem here with the Astron, and I suspect the manufacturer's supplies are likely pretty well r.f. suppressed, but always check things out. Haven't had it on when on 160M, but will try it to see. Most of the switchers made for the ham rigs are quiet, but likely some do have some problems.

3) The annual **county hunter convention** was held in the Denver, CO area. The weather cooperated with beautiful sunny days for most part. Quite a large crowd turned up to enjoy the event, and every CO County was run multiple times on every band and mode. More later in the newsletter.

4) **QSY to 40M** - Some of the newcomers think that 'not mentioning 40M' when mobiles QSY there, and not 'allowing' requests for mobiles to go to 40M is 'standard 20M net policy'. No way. For 30 years, one could request a mobile to go to 40M and for over 30 years, net controls would tell the rest of the folks that the mobile was QSY to 40M SSB.

It seems a new fairly recent unwritten rule on 14.336 is 'Thou shalt not **dare mention** the 40M SSB net'. As part of that **RULE**, don't bother to ask NC for a mobile to QSY to 40M (even for a LC) as net control and assistant net control won't pass that request to the mobile, and if an assistant slips up, he will be rudely reminded 'that is **not allowed**'. If you ask, you'll be told "That is **not allowed**'. Now for 30 plus years, the regular NC stations like WA3TUC, WA9QNI, K5CWR/AB5SL, W6TPD, K1ER, N1FJR, WA7IRD, W7LQT, WV2B, WA4KER, and dozens of others had no problems or

phobias about 40M. County hunting is about getting folks their last counties. Regardless of the band. In some cases, that means the contact will be made on 40M. Getting the station and the mobile together down there is important to folks finishing up.

At times, a mobile may have already run on 40M, or might have to tune an antenna (screwdriver) to get there and may not go unless requested. Not only that, with no ability to know if a mobile is gone to 40M, or with no ability to request a mobile to meet you on 40M, the net wastes time with more and more “tu tu tu tu” relays since the folks don’t know if there is a chance for 40M. Better take the attempt at a relay on 20M. This **40M phobia** seems to have started within the past few years. Before that, it was common to hear NC say “the mobile is QSY to 40M”, or pass along a request for 40M or a special freq (as for back east or in the evening) to get the contact made.

There seems to be no justification for this ‘40 meter phobia’ other than **paranoia** that some mobiles may QSY to 40M and not come back to 20M to run more counties for a while. Just one more thing added to the long list of things that **‘aren’t allowed’** any more on 14.336 by one individual.

Allegedly this ‘rule’ started, according to KM9X and his post on K3IMC, which reads:

“The real story is a mobile was asked to go to 40m. Jim announced he was going, When people went there, he never ran for some reason. The asswipes actually went on the 20m net and gave Jim hell for saying the mobile was going to 40m and he never showed.. “

NC got upset that he got ‘blamed’ after a mobile had been requested to go to 40M and the two stations did not connect down there. Hey, that isn’t NC’s problem, but other things at play. It’s county hunting, not getting every county every time every day. If NC passed the message, that is all that is required. Not much different than when the mobile says next county is YYY, and runs through it before he is called again on 20M, or runs it off freq and someone misses it. Or because of long strings of ‘tu tu tu tu’ relays, going on for 5 minutes, the mobile runs out of the county before getting to run on 40M.

All NC has to do is pass the request for 40M. Just like in the past. Plain and simple.

5) **Team Contacts** - Last month we talked about the way 'team contacts' were done in the old days. Some wanted further explanation. Way back when, fixed stations gave a report to the team. One would acknowledge it. The other in the team would then give the report. It was then decided later that both would have to acknowledge the report they got, and both would have to return reports, which is the way we do it today. Initially it was the 'old way' that was acceptable, but changed overnight. What was strange is that the awards custodian decided that all those team contacts retroactively counted for nothing. It would have made a lot more sense if it was just future contacts that had to be changed.

6) **Eddie, G4KHG**, has been county hunting and going mobile since 1982. This trip, he gave his first LC WBOW to N9ID (formerly KT5H) who has been working on his USCA since 1971! Eddie promises a full report later for the folks on his latest trip out west.

7) **Joe, N5UZW**, won SSB Net Control of the Year. The new 40M on 7185 KHz, which allowed day long operation without QRM from the 'Rotten Apple' fans on 7238, made for lots of fun on 40M SSB. Dan, KM9X, was also nominated for SSB Net Control of the Year – Dan was one of the first to get to 7185 on the first morning it was an 'expanded phone band' frequency, and he staked out that frequency for the county hunters! Both well deserved honors. Even more important since 7185 has become the mainstay frequency in the sunspot minimum for close in contacts. More on all the awards later in this issue. The Editor is glad to see recognition go to the two who did so much positive for county hunting in the past year.

8) **N0ZA Email** – N0ZA's forwarding email for southcentral@marac.org was incorrect in the database translation. Likely for a year or two – typo in the MARAC system. I got a 'bounced email' and notified him of it. He got it straightened out. With all the official business being sent to him by the BOD members, you would have thought have one of them would have had the courtesy when they saw bounced mail to let him know of the problem sooner? So if you sent him email and he didn't respond, now you know why! It seems to be fixed now.

9) **Interference to mobiles.** During the first part of July, there seemed to be an unusual amount of interference with mobile's runs. This had been going on for at least six months. It seemed that AA9JJ/N9QPQ, N8KIE, KA1YZV, AB4YZ, KL1V, K3IMC, KM9X/KM9MGI, WY7LL/ML, W6TMD, and nearly every other mobile on the way to the convention experienced the phenomena when certain stations called them. All of a sudden, there would be coughing, a funny little laugh (very identifiable), mumbling, etc, when signal reports were being exchanged, or when the mobile's county was being given. At times, the interference prevented anyone from getting through when a mobile called QRZ, and certain stations were calling along with a dozen others. Now what did that accomplish other than annoy the mobiles, waste a lot of net time, etc., and demonstrate **contempt for ALL the county hunters** trying to work the mobile, plus contempt the mobile op too? If you read the MARAC award rules, interference to mobile 'operations' is grounds for disqualification from the MARAC awards program. Same for attempting to discredit an operation.

It seems lately that the interference seems to have ceased. Let us hope it continues that way. There is NO REASON to attempt to jam anyone, including the few out there who seem to delight in trying to make a difficult job harder for both net controls and for mobiles. It would be nice if the FCC yanked a few licenses for this.

K2NJ- Bill Inkrote – SK

William "Bill" Inkrote, K2NJ, passed away on July 16, 2007. Fighting health problems for the past few years, Bill still enthusiastically did as much county hunting as possible, making long trips in a custom fit RV. Bill served as MARAC President for many years, was an avid CW contester, DXer and county hunter, one of the first on 30 meters when we started on that band. With a big booming signal on all bands, Bill was aiming for top spot on the County Challenge Award listing as his next challenge.

Scottie, N4AAT, posted on the K3IMC forum:

“God looked around his garden and found an empty place. He then looked down upon the earth and saw your tired face. He put his arms around you and lifted you to rest. God's garden must be beautiful because he always takes the best. He knew that you were suffering and he knew you were in pain. He knew that you would never get well on Earth again. He saw that the road was getting rough and the hills were hard to climb. So he closed your weary eyelids and whispered peace be thine. It broke our hearts to lose you but you didn't go alone for part of us went with you the day God called Bill home. RIP Bill”

On the Road with N4CD

Things were slow toward the end of June, so I decided it was time for a road trip. I did some operating at Field Day with the Plano Radio Club K5PRK, and enjoyed it. Joyce, N9STL, had worked all but one county for the fifth time, and needed Pointe Coupee, LA for the last WBOW. That was a ‘good reason’ for a ‘road trip’.

I needed to run a half dozen or so for Master Platinum in LA, and about 8 more to finish transmitting from LA for the second time. I could also get 4 more MPs in TX on the way there. Nearby was MS, where I also had many for MP and for Second Time TX. The weather was bad in Dallas, with feet of rain, so it was a good reason to get out of town and miss the rain for a few days. It's still flooding in parts of TX a month later. Wacky weather this year.

Wow! I checked the W6RK spots. Most of LA only gets run once or twice a year, and if you are looking for things like Pointe Coupee, LA on cw, it is slim pickings! Same for many of the others. We could sure use a good cw op who runs around down there for the folks. That's also true in many other locations. The days of 2000 MARAC members and mobiles all over the country seem to be in the past. Every state used to have someone who would clean up the needs once or twice a year. I'm sure many remember WA0SBR, who ran the entire state of SD twice a year! Then he took trips to different states and ran every county in a state on 20 and 40M.

I gathered up the maps and plotted out a course to hit the four in TX that were needed, then into LA. After checking the 'needs' on the K3IMC page, a few zigs and zags were added. Two years ago I made a trip down there for an XYL who needed a last county – and that was a few months after Katrina- finding a motel was hard. Things are now back to somewhat normal, so motels can be found with little hassle. There's not much reason to visit Cameron and Vermilion, LA, other than being a county hunter! AC0B needed one there and it worked out fine on 20M. Naturally, you always keep cellphone numbers handy in case you have to arrange for the contact 'off net'.

After the first long day, I wound up in Lafayette, LA at a Motel 6 around 7pm. Nearby was a Cracker Barrel restaurant so I enjoyed a country ham dinner. Conditions were fairly good, and folks were chasing MP counties – and the MP holders came out in force – W6TMD, ND3T, AA9JJ/N9QPQ, N4UJK, N4AAT, N8KIE, W3CR, AB2LS, VE9DH, N0ZA, K5GE, KC0JG, N9STL, WG6X – giving me credit for MP by working them from the county. Not only was the weather good, it was horrible in Dallas area, so that was a bonus to be away from it.

The second day was off to get a LC WBOW for Joyce in Pointe Coupee. She was up at 7am as I hit the road, and it wasn't much later before she finished up for Fifth Time, getting number 83! In Louisiana, the lines are often wet, and the sign in the middle of the bridge making it hard to run county lines!



Pointe Coupee, LA – at the bridge

After that, it was back to the Interstate 10, around toward New Orleans, and up into MS.

Several others had run LA and MS for Platinum, but the skip had been ‘too long’ or ‘too short’ for the time of day and I missed them from the home QTH. Like Master Gold, you can also go to the county, so that’s what I did, and many others. The clouds were heavy and it looked like it might rain at any time.

The roads were good, so I made good time. In Marion County, the sky turned dark, and the radio stations were saying severe thunderstorm warnings. That really wasn’t necessary as lightning was zipping down all along the southeast horizon, with intense dark black clouds. Fortunately, my route took me back north, then west, avoiding nearly all the rain that day. I zipped up to Claiborne, MS, a tough one, running the county line of Claiborne and Copiah, then down through Franklin, Adams, and down to Wilkinson to finish off that corner.



N4CD C/L Claiborne/Copiah, MS

The second night was spent at a ‘Relax Inn’, which is a new name for the Scottish Inns, in Natchez, MS. There was a nearby Shoney’s Restaurant. I like the places with fast service or buffets when I’m traveling. Ryan’s Steak House or Golden Corral or similar, where you can get some salad, fruit, and choice of dinner for a reasonable price with quick service. Then it is back to

the room for logs and checking the next days route, and maybe some news on TV, and then to sleep. If the motel has wireless internet, sometimes I'll pull the email and read it.

On the third day, it was back into LA to get Concordia, then up to the Interstate, and a quick trip back to Dallas. On the way into town, the skies opened and the rain poured down for 20 miles, slowing the highway down to about 30mph. One accident on the Interstate backed things up for 5 miles when someone slid into a guard rail on very wet roads apparently. Everyone had to 'rubber neck' as they went by. Interstates aren't always faster than back roads.

Around Marble Falls, 18 inches of rain fell in 6 hours. If you have ever been on "Hill Country" roads and seen the 'rain gauges' at the side of the road, where it crosses small creeks or just has a low point, marked in feet, and wondered what the heck are these here for.....when it really rains, those gullies can be six feet deep in water in less than 20 minutes. Many back roads simply become impassible. Rivers come up 30 feet and flood all the 'creeks' that don't exist much of the year – just stream beds. Suddenly they are full. And overflowing.

Joe, N5UZW, Dan, KM9X, and Joyce, N9STL were always there on 7185 running things, with AD4IA, Randy, jumping in all the time to help out. Rufus, KD4HXM, Ed, N4UJK, Ray, WA5OPO, Frosty, W0FP, and many others helped out with relays, and all the runs were spotted quickly nearly all the time. I ran most counties on 20/30/40cw and 40SSB, and the first day on 20M SSB. Eddie, W7/G4KHG was back in the 'lower 48' after running some HI counties, for some vacation and county putting out, and occasionally I snagged AB4YZ for a new one on cw. Ray's adjustable antenna was stuck on 20M at that time, so you had to catch him 'up 3' for cw. Rob, K0RU was giving out some KS, and K0RCJ was busy handing out the counties as well.

It was a good 3 day trip – lots of contacts, some LCs for the folks, and things worked well. It was also a good check out run for the new antenna system, essentially the same as the old one, but rebuilt after the mast failure. I hope you got a bunch you needed that trip. Things were set for the July trip to Denver.

Flat-Screen TVs – Power Hogs

Post on the web -

So how do CRTs, LCDs, and plasmas stack up?.

Philips has some of the most open power-consumption reporting, so let's start there. The company's 19-inch LCD consumes 60 watts, while its 20-inch CRT consumes 120 watts. Sounds good for LCD so far. But jump up to a 26-inch LCD and you're now at 120 watts, while the 27-inch CRT... still consumes just 120 watts. Whoa! JVC's 32-inch CRT consumes "140 to 150 watts" while its 32-inch LCD eats 159 watts.

Beyond this level, things really start to get hairy. Of course, you can't find CRTs beyond this size any more, but Philips' 47-inch LCD consumes a whopping 290 watts and its 50-inch plasma eats up a mind-bending 400 watts! If you replaced a 26-inch CRT with that 50-inch plasma, you more than *tripled* your power bill on that outlet.

There's also the not-so-small issue of other equipment: No one likes a big picture without big sound.. The cost of 5.1 surround sound? 630 watts! A big plasma and a good receiver can easily eat up a full 1000 watts of power. There's one decent option for those who want a big TV without a big power bill: Rear projection sets. JVC offers two 56-inch projection TVs with power consumption of just 215 to 240 watts. The technology may not be as exciting as the latest flat panels, but your wallet may be worth listening to on this one.

Closing In on USCA

July was a good month for snagging counties out west with mobiles running to and from the convention, and some putting out entire states. Several long time county hunters are closing in on USCA. Check the needs page and see if you can help them out. (<http://208.178.228.13/cgi-bin/flynn/needs.pl>) See the K3IMC Special Needs Page.

Jim, AD1C is down to 12 to go for USCA! Jerry, K1SO is down to around 60, and Ron, K2RP is down to just six to go! N4AKP has only three to go for all CW.

Rufus, KD4HXM, has under 30 for Masters Gold. WB4KZW has only two to go for USCA! Let's get those last two for him. Brady, WA4RNN has five to go! K4UNF has 3 to go! K4YT has 5 to go! W5DU has 25 to go for first time.

K5OT is down to 20 to go for first time, and WD6CKT is down to five for 2nd time. WA6OCV under 40 now for USCA. Leo, WY7LL been working at it since 1984, and now closing in! San, N7PIB at about 30 for MG. W8ILC needs 4 for finishing 2nd time, and N8KIE needs just 3 for 3rd time! N9KNJ down to around 50 to go. W0DFK needs five to get MG. Bill, WA0KAQ has been working at this for over 30 years and now down to 10!

There are many folks working on various awards (2nd time, Bingo, nth time, prefixes) that are within 10 or 20 or 30 of finishing, many with needs of a single county or two counties in a state. It sure is nice to see folks finish up with USCA, and get higher level awards. It's summer weather – folks are making trips – maybe a 10 mile detour will help someone out.

Can you help out these folks? Take a few minutes to go through the needs page. You can search by state needs, or just see who is down to 10 or 20 or 30 and see if any in your state or nearby in adjoining state. If you have a good lead as to who might run that county often, send an email to the county hunter saying 'try XXX for county YYY'. It's one over from his home county. Let's get these folks finished up!

The Corn Con

The ethanol madness continues! Last week, the Senate passed an energy bill mandating the production of 36 billion gallons of ethanol per year by 2022—a sevenfold increase over current levels. Senators congratulated themselves for their environmental foresight. The president, a biofuels advocate, has enthusiastically endorsed the ethanol surge. But it's almost certainly a fantasy, since no one in Washington seems to have thought for five minutes about where or how that much ethanol could be produced.”

Yes, the euphoria over farm subsidies and a 9 billion a year corn subsidy program keeps a lot of farmers happy, and their Senators/House members in power. Politics at work.

Let's assume that only half of U.S. corn gets used for ethanol production. That would provide about 14 billion gallons of the 36 billion gallons demanded by the Senate. The other 22 billion gallons of alcohol will have to come from cellulosic ethanol—a fuel that can be made from cornstalks, wood chips, or grass (that legendary "switch grass" that President Bush likes to talk about).

Developing an ethanol production system based on biomass will likely take decades. It took more than 25 years of federal subsidies before corn ethanol production reached 5 billion gallons per year. In fact, it took 13 years just to get to 1 billion gallons. Given the massive investments required for new distilleries, storage tanks, and transportation networks, it's reasonable to assume that it will take at least that long for cellulosic ethanol to reach similar production levels. And yet, the Senate expects the cellulosic ethanol business will grow to be four times as large as the corn ethanol sector is today, and do so in just 15 years.

Thirty-six billion gallons of ethanol a year sounds like a lot, but it's only 2.34 million barrels per day. Given ethanol lower heat content—about two-thirds that of gasoline—the effective production would be equivalent to 1.54 million barrels of oil per day. The United States uses nearly 21 million barrels of oil per day, of which 12.54 million barrels are imported. Thus, even if American ethanol producers can miraculously achieve the Senate's goal of 36 billion gallons per year by 2022, they will be producing the equivalent of just 7.4 percent of America's total current oil needs and just 12.2 percent of its imports. That quantity of ethanol will not take America very far toward the oft-repeated goal of energy independence.

Of course, at the rate the US consumption is growing, in another 18 years, by 2025, the USA will be using 5 or 10 million more barrels of fuel a day, so the addition from ethanol won't even close the gap! It will widen!

Alas, the ethanol craze isn't limited to Congress. Presidential candidate and former Sen. John Edwards, a Democrat, has declared that the United States should be producing 65 billion gallons of ethanol and other biofuels per year by 2025.

Running that Light Bulb

Question: How much coal is required to run a 100-watt light bulb 24 hours a day for a year?

We'll start by figuring out how much energy in kilowatt-hours the light bulb uses per year. We multiply how much power it uses in kilowatts, by the number of hours in a year. That gives $0.1 \text{ kW} \times 8,760 \text{ hours}$ or **876 kWh**.

The thermal energy content of coal is 6,150 kWh/ton. Although coal fired power generators are very efficient, they are still limited by the laws of thermodynamics. Only about 40 percent of the thermal energy in coal is converted to electricity. So the electricity generated per ton of coal is $0.4 \times 6,150 \text{ kWh}$ or **2,460 kWh/ton**.

To find out how many tons of coal were burned for our light bulb, we divide 876 kWh by 2,460 kWh/ton. That equals 0.357 tons. Multiplying by 2,000 pounds/ton we get **714 pounds** of coal. That is a big pile of coal. Let's look at what else was produced to power that light bulb.

That light bulb will cause 5 pounds of sulfur dioxide, 5 pounds of nitrogen oxides, and a whopping **1852 pounds** of carbon dioxide to be produced!

Just think how much your ham radio gear causes to be emitted from the coal burning power plants (which provide over half the US electricity). Maybe it's time to change to a compact fluorescent bulb to save the environment a bit.

Convention Time- Trip Report

July around quickly, so it was off to the convention for a hundred county hunters – all heading to Denver, CO for the annual MARAC get-together. I headed out a few days early leaving Collin County with plans to run around CO to finish off transmitted counties second time, and pick up a few Platinum ones as well. It had been raining for 3 weeks so I was anxious to get to somewhere dry. Three years of drought in TX, then a year with 100% above normal rainfall, floods, and not so fun weather to be mobile.

As usually, I copied a map out of the coloring book to use as my route double check, and plotted the route on the maps headed up the quickest way to CO from here. Pete, N4AKP, had mentioned he needed Hall, TX for a last county for Bingo – so I made sure to go that way.

When I was in Wichita, TX, K9WA said “I need Archer TX for a LC”. It’s a five mile detour to get it, so I could get it for him with no hassle. (I always take a lot of pics in case some ‘loudmouth’ in FL starts blabbing ‘He wasn’t in TX, CO, or wherever!’) Besides, folks like to see mobiles in their LC. In the old days, I took a regular picture and mailed it off. Now I use a digital camera and send it to them via email or put in the CHNews.



N4CD/m Archer, TX LC for K9WA

Then it was up highway 287, the main road to Denver from Dallas. When I got to Hall, TX, I gave Pete N4AKP a call. He is closing in on Bingo. We made a good contact.



N4CD/m Hall, TX – LC for N4AKP

Janet, KC5QCB, had listed Collingsworth as a need, and I sent her an email telling her I would try and get it for her. It's a five mile detour up to the County Line of Hall/Collingsworth, and there's a good spot to run it. I heard a few others run it later. We had a good QSO and Janet scratched that from the needs list! Quiet location. She's closing in.

Then it was time to 'run around' CO. Lots of interesting things to see and do, but also lots of barren desolate countryside, or grasslands back in the S.E. corner. As I traveled through Pueblo, CO, Arden hopped in his car and chased me down. As I was zipping along, a Buick comes up along side me, honking and pointing at my antennas. I had no idea what was going on, but pulled over at the side of the road, and Arden comes and introduces himself! I stopped by his house for a visit. Arden frequently helps out on the cw net – all bands. He runs a vertical and wire antennas, having lost the beam in a storm a few years ago.



AA0IP, Arden, in the hamshack – Pueblo, CO

After that, it was around the south part of CO, staying overnight in Alamosa. Then around up to the NW corner, stopping in Rifle, then up to Moffat and Routt and back to Denver running about 2/3rds of the state in the process. The car complained a bit going over the big mountain passes, but made it OK. Now the odometer is approaching 160,000 miles on it. I hope it runs OK to over 200K miles, then I'll figure out what next.

Darrel, W6TMD, was headed to the convention up through UT. Even in Denver, the skies were grey with the forest fire smoke in UT, which shut down the Interstate for hours at a time in southern UT with dense smoke too heavy to drive through. Gerry, W0GXQ, was running through ND and SD on his way to the convention. Those are tough counties to get on CW. AA8R, Randy, ran dozens on cw, and Mark, W9OP occasionally put out some on cw. KS5A/m came up from NM to the convention.

Things went well, and runs were good on cw and 40M SSB. Many mobiles were out, but it seems everyone got to run on cw, occasionally moving down 2 when two mobiles were QRV (ready) at the same time. The main cw net is on 14.0565 and the normal procedure is to move down 2, more or less. The FISTS group are up around 058-060, and we want them to stay up there, and we go down not to bother them. If someone is already in a normal QSO down 2, go down another 0.5 or 0.75. Folks will find you, and usually someone will spot you. I was chasing W6TMD, N8KIE and AA9JJ for the Platinum counties and they were working me as well. 40M was excellent most of the time for the mobiles, until they got 'too close' then folks didn't hear the others either on 20M, 30M or 40M! I still managed to work

W6TMD many times direct at over 100 miles on cw, and some days we had short skip on 20M across the state.

It was tough to work the DX this trip – summer doldrums – but I worked some of the DX crowd from some of the counties. LY2ZZ, OK1APV, PA3ARM, OH3JF, DL6KVA and a few others made it through to the mobiles. The further north and east you were, the easier it was to hear the DX.

Jerry, W0GXQ needed Pitkin, CO, so I made sure when I got there he got a call immediately. On the way home, Jerry gave N4CD the last with Sully, SD.



N4CD/m Pitkin, CO, LC for W0GXQ

Now for those who are new to county hunting, you may hear on SSB after a Last County contact “I’ll do the paperwork”. That means that the person who just received the last county will send in for an award (certificate) for the county hunter mobile who made the contact – via the MARAC web page or via regular mail with an application form (and the usual nominal fee). This allows the mobiles to receive recognition, and to get honored by increasing levels of ‘last counties given’ plaques.

There are some great places to run counties in CO. Three cities allow gambling – Cripple Creek, Blackhawk, and Central City. At one time you had to go through Blackhawk to get to Central City. The folks in Central

City decided that too many stopped before they got to their city, so they built a nice 4 lane expressway from the Interstate right up to the town high in the mountains. You enter the Gilpin County right off the Interstate, but the further up the road you go, the better the propagation. From just before the town about 8 miles up the road, I was easily hearing mobiles 200-250 miles away on groundwave on 20M! I stayed overnight in Georgetown, CO – an interesting tourist spot with a unique 360 degree loop of railroad tracks to get from the town up to the silver mines 6 miles further up the canyon! It's at 8300 feet elevation, so it is nice and cool in the evenings.

The three gambling towns used to be old mining towns – now, they are nothing but casinos and high priced eateries. Gigantic parking lots outside town, with buses to the casinos downtown. The storefronts have been 'preserved' but nothing else. However, towns like Georgetown, Silverton, (end of the Durango-Silverton Railroad Ride), Leadville, and others up in the mountains still retain much of the 'old mining town' charm and feel.

The convention hotel was being refurbished, but in fairly good shape with good meeting facilities, a good 'free' hot breakfast included each morning. The parking lot was full of antennas! I arrived on Thursday to join in the fun. The regular folks at the hotel wondered what was going on with all those strange, big antennas on the 60 cars outside in the parking lot.

This year, Larry W0QE created the "Mobile Bake-Off". This was an evaluation of the performance of the actual county hunter mobile installations on the actual vehicles. Larry assembled a precision measuring set up, with measurements made at a 15 degree take off angle. Test vehicles were positioned with the antenna in the same location, about 150 feet away from the measuring antenna (not in the near field). For about half the entrants, measurements were taken with the vehicle in 4 positions to evaluate front to back ratios. There were small antennas (mini-screw drivers) and regular screwdrivers and 6 and 8 and 10 foot long mast antennas, side mounted antennas on the rear quarter panel, ones on the roof, on the trunk deck, and on the trailer hitch type mounts.

There was no 'setting' of the power level – what was measured was what your radio was putting out on the test frequencies. Two mobiles had amplifiers and naturally were at the top of the 'big signal' category. Many others were tightly spaced around near the top of the 100W class of mobiles. He measured mostly on 40, 30, and 20M, but a few had sigs measured on 17, 15, 10, 6, 80 and 160M as well.

Larry has published the data at:

http://www.bnk.com/w0qe/2007_MARAC_Bakeoff_Results.pdf

Friday was the 'tour day' with folks headed to the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and to Celestial Seasonings. Others just went off shopping the antique stores and malls, while some others went out to run some counties! Later in the day, Ron, K2RP had a "Pizza Snack and Palaver", bringing in a huge pile of pizzas for an afternoon treat. Joyce, WB9NUL, kept the hospitality room going and well stocked.



K2RP – Ron – Held the Pizza Fest

This was the first convention for Ron, who has been very active on SSB and CW trying to close in on USACA. Ron was first licensed back in the 50s, but just recently gotten seriously into county hunting. He's a 'west coaster' and conditions aren't that great for picking up those ones he needs. Yet, he's down to just a few to finish up.

The MARAC BOD met on Saturday morning. After that were CW meetings, Digital Group meetings, and presentations on "how to get your last counties" by K2RP, the Antenna forum by Barry, W9UCW, marac Logger, and K1DFO on HDTV.

It was good to see some of the old timers. Bill, K0ERE, came with Randy, W0DSY. Now 86, Randy is very active chasing mobiles and working on more awards. Many will remember him running all over KS, selling Fuller

brushes for many, many years, and putting out all those counties for the folks.



Randy W0DSY USCA #289

Harry, W6TPC, who frequently ran the net in the past, showed up and enjoyed meeting old friends.



Harry, W6TPC USCA #922

Saturday evening was time for the presentation of the major awards. The following awards were announced. The first five awards are given based upon the quarterly votes.

Best Team of the Year - AA9JJ/N9QPQ. (Runner up KM9X/KB9MGI and N0KV/N0LFV)

Best CW NC - W0GXQ. (Runner up - N4CD and NM2L)

Best SSB NC - N5UZW. (runner up KM9X and KZ2P)

Best CW Mobile - W0GXQ. (runner up N9JF and N4CD)



W0GXQ USCA #1006 – Best CW Mobile/ Best CW NC

Best SSB Mobile - KL1V (runner up N8KIE, K0RCJ)

The next awards are selected from those eligible for the award (you can only win CHOTY once in your life)



KL1V, USCA #1015, receiving SSB CHOTY 2007 from KC5QCB

CW CHOTY - N9JF. (runner up NM2L and KL1V)

SSB CHOTY - KL1V. (runner up N4UJK and WQ7A)

Congrats to all those honored by these awards by their fellow county hunters!

KK0L, USCA #433, received the MARAC gigantic trophy for running all US counties, #8.



John, KK0L, and wife Arlene – MARAC Trophy

Ran All Counties #8

Mobiles headed back out on Sunday morning with busy bands. I ran two days on the way home, discovering I had to take a 100 mile detour around a road with a ‘closed bridge’ in NM to get to Curry and Roosevelt, NM. I made it home without problems, and am still chasing those mobiles taking the ‘long way’ home from the convention as of two weeks after. Some will be out there till August.

There was lots of activity, with dozens of mobiles putting out counties in over 35 states as they headed to Denver, and home, many through some of the seldom run ones out west. Teams running all over the country – KA9JAC/KB9VYT, AA9JJ/N9QPQ, N8BGF/KC8WRP, W0NAC/N0LXJ, AB5ZX/KC5QCB, WY7LL/WY7ML, N0KV/N0LFV and more.

Storing Electricity for Later Use

A new type of a room-size battery, however, may be poised to store energy for the nation's vast electric grid almost as easily as a reservoir stockpiles water. Compared with other utility-scale batteries plagued by limited life

spans or unwieldy bulk, the sodium-sulfur (NaS) battery is compact, long-lasting and efficient.

Using NaS batteries, utilities could defer for years, and possibly even avoid, construction of new transmission lines, substations and power plants. They make wind power — wildly popular but frustratingly intermittent — a more reliable resource. And they provide backup power in case of outages, such as the one that hit New York City last week.

Such benefits are important because power demand is projected to soar 50% by 2030 and other methods of expanding the power supply are facing growing obstacles. Congress is likely to cap carbon dioxide emissions by traditional power plants to curtail global warming. Meanwhile, communities are fighting plans for thousands of miles of high-voltage transmission lines needed to zap electricity across regions. There is still significant opposition to new nuclear facilities.

American Electric Power, one of the largest U.S. utilities, has been using a 1.2 megawatt NaS battery in Charleston, W.Va., the past year and plans to install one twice the size next year. Dozens of utilities are considering the battery according to the Japanese company that makes them.

The NaS battery is the most advanced of several energy-storage technologies that utilities are testing. The oldest and most widespread form of energy storage in the USA, pumped hydroelectricity, collects water after it spins a turbine and uses a small amount of electricity to send it back and repeat the process. County Hunters who went to the Roanoke Convention and went on the excursion on Smith Mountain Lake were right in the middle of a 'pumped storage' reservoir!

The biggest drawback is price. The battery costs about \$2,500 per kilowatt, which is about 10% more than a new coal-fired plant. Mass production, however, is expected to drive prices down. NaS batteries may start to become widespread within a decade.

They are not suitable for cars or home use – they operate at 300 degrees C! For commercial use, that is something that can be managed.

More reading at:

http://thefraserdomain.typepad.com/energy/2006/01/sodiumsulfur_na.html

<http://www.ngk.co.jp/english/products/power/nas/index.html>

Awards

Transmitted All Counties #8, John, KK0L, 6/27/2007
Fifth Time #83, Joyce, N9STL, 6/27/2007
Bingo #293, Bob, N4XML, July 3, 2007
Bingo II #45, Scottie, N4AAT, July 2, 2007
Five Star #28, Scottie, N4AAT, July 2, 2007
Sixth Time #30, Scottie, N4AAT, July 2, 2007
Second Time #372, Ralph, WA4HXG, July 4, 2007
Third time #206, AB4YZ, Ray, 7/7/2007
Masters Gold #25, KB6UF, Ron, 7/11/2007
Seventh Time #9, W3CR, Chuck, July 19, 2007
Third Time #207, W8DCH, Ernie, July 19, 2007
Marac Bingo V #1, W3CR, Chuck, July 19, 2007
USA-CW #90, W8DCH, Ernie, July 19, 2007

Operating Events for County Hunters

**Courtesy of the ARRL Contest Calendar, ARRL, Inc, Newington, CT
06111**

Some interesting contests are coming up in August – good for band counties and snagging some of the ones you need toward various awards.

Ten-Ten International Summer Phone QSO Party -- sponsored by Ten-Ten International from 0001Z Aug 4-2359Z Aug 5, 10 meters only. Exchange: call, name, state and 10-10 number (if available). QSO points: nonmembers -- 1 pt, members -- 2 pts. Total score: sum of QSO points. For more information: www.ten-ten.org.

North American QSO Party -- CW, sponsored by the *National Contest Journal* from 1800Z Aug 4-0600Z Aug 5 (see Jan *QST*, page 101, or www.ncjweb.com).

Maryland-DC QSO Party -- CW/Phone/Digital, sponsored by the Antietam Radio Association from 1600Z Aug 11-0400Z Aug 12 and 1600Z-2359Z Aug 12. Frequencies (MHz): CW -- 3.643, 7.060, 14.060, 21.060, 28.035, Phone -- 1.895, 3.920, 7.230, 14.270, 21.370, 28.370, VHF/UHF-50.150, 52.525, 144.15, 146.55, 146.580, 432.15, 446.000. Categories: Club, Mobile, QRP, and Standard. Work stations once per band/mode, portable/mobiles can be worked again in each county. Exchange: QTH and category. QSO points: Club -- 10 pts, Mobile -- 5 pts, QRP -- 4 pts, CW or Digital -- 3 pts, all others -- 1 pt. Highest single point value applies. Score: QSO points × MD counties + Baltimore City + DC. (MD-DC stations also count states and DXCC entities) For more information: www.w3cwc.org/funcontest.htm.

New Jersey QSO Party -- CW/Phone, sponsored by Englewood ARA from 2000Z Aug 18-0700Z Aug 19 and 1300Z Aug 19-0200Z Aug 20. Frequencies (MHz): 1.810, 3.535, 7.035, 14.035, 21.100, 28.100, SSB -- 3.950, 7.235, 14.285, 21.355, 28.400, VHF/UHF 50-50.5 and 144-146 MHz. Exchange: QSO number and S/P/C or NJ county. QSO points: 3 pts/QSO. Score: QSO points × NJ counties. NJ stations use NJ counties + states (except NJ) + provinces, max. 83. For more information: www.qsl.net/w2rj.

Hawaii QSO Party -- CW/Phone/RTTY/PSK31, sponsored by the Koolau ARC from 0700Z Aug 25-2200Z Aug 26. Frequencies: 160-10 meters. Categories: SOAB and MS (single or mixed-mode), MM (mixed-mode only). Spotting nets and packet allowed in all classes. Exchange: RS(T) and S/P/C, maritime region (1-3), or HI county. QSO points: 20-15-10 meters, Phone -- 1 pt, CW/Digital -- 2 pts; 40 meters, Phone -- 2 pts, CW/Digital 4 pts; 80 meters, Phone -- 4 pts, CW/Digital -- 8 pts; 160 meters, Phone 8 pts, CW/Digital 16 pts. Score is total points plus 150 pts for QSO with KH6J. For more information: www.karc.us/hi_qso_party.html

Ohio QSO Party -- CW/SSB, sponsored by the Mad River Radio Club from 1600Z Aug 25-0400Z Aug 26. Frequencies (MHz): CW -- 3.545, 7.045, 14.045, 21.045, 28.045; SSB -- 3.825, 7.200, 14.250, 21.300, and 28.450. Categories: SO, MM, Mobile and Rover. Exchange: Serial Number and Ohio county, state or province, DX stations send DX. QSO points: CW -- 2 pts, SSB -- 1 pt. Score: QSO points × OH counties (OH station count states, provinces, and OH counties) counted once per mode. For more information: **www.oqp.us**.

End Comments - That's it for this month. Next month we'll delve into what the MARAC BOD did at the board meeting held during the convention.

In a future issue, we'll talk about 'remoting your station' with the latest hardware/software possibilities. With deed restrictions limiting what many can do, this might be one possibility to have a better station away from your main house. You can also easily remote a receiver should you want to do that. Then listening to that receiver can be like listening to a 'radio station' on the internet using standard programs. With broadband showing up everywhere, the bandwidth is easily there to handle such projects! Eddie, G4KHG, promised a trip report for the folks. Keep the pics and news items coming ! See you next month.