

# County Hunter News

January 1, 2017  
Volume 13 Issue 1

Welcome to the On-Line County Hunter News, a monthly publication for those interested in ham radio 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 provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, ham radio or electronics history, general ham radio interest, and provide news of upcoming operating events.

We hope you will enjoy the 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.

CW County Hunter Nets run on 14.0565, 10.122.5, and 7056.5, with activity occasionally on 3556.5 KHz. Also, there is SSB activity now is on 'friendly net' 7188 KHz. The cw folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.9155, and 28.0565 when sunspots better). Look around 18136 or for occasional 17M SSB runs usually after the run on 20M SSB. (21.336 and 28.336)

You can see live spots of county hunter activity at [ch.W6RK.com](http://ch.W6RK.com)

For information on county hunting, check out the following resources:

The USACA award is sponsored by CQ Magazine. Rules and information are here:

<http://countyhunter.com/cq.htm>

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

<http://countyhunter.com/whatis.htm>

MARAC sponsors an award program for many other county hunting awards. You can

find information on these awards and the rules at:

[http://countyhunter.com/marac\\_information\\_package.htm](http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm)

The CW net procedure is written up at:

<http://www.wd3p.net/ch/netproc/netproc.htm>

There is a lot more information at [www.countyhunter.com](http://www.countyhunter.com) . Please check it out.

Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at [www.CHNewsonline.com](http://www.CHNewsonline.com)

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

<http://pages.suddenlink.net/w4ydy/hamlinks.html#County>

Download the file to a flash card that fits in your GPS unit, turn it on, and the county lines should appear!

De N4CD, Editor (email: [telegraphy@verizon.net](mailto:telegraphy@verizon.net) )

## Notes from the Editor

### **N4CD Rumbings**

It's coming up on 2017. Where did 2016 go? There were lots of good county hunting activities during the year and at least 1000 different counties were on the air – maybe 1500 or more. Bob, N8KIE put the rare Kalawao on, and mobiles were running in MT and ND and other rarer states.

We had a great County Hunter Convention hosted by Kerry, W4ISG and family. That

was after a good Dayton County Hunter Forum hosted by Tim, W8JJ....and that was after a super nice MI MINI in the Spring. Maybe we should try to get back a few minis for the times in between? Coming up in 2017, we have the Spring MI MINI, and likely a Dayton Hamfest Forum at the new facility.....and the Annual Convention will be in Colorado Springs.

Bands have been going downhill. 17M is quiet most days. 15 seems to perk up in contests but it too will be doing less and less as we head into the sunspot minimum. Not many are still making forecasts on this one – it's been not cooperating with the modes with the double peak we had. Who knows? For sure, 40m and 30m might be the best CH bands with 20m open just a few hours a day.

Many are still off on trips – headed here and there – west coast to east coast – down to FL and back - off to see the relatives - and so on. State QSO parties will likely see a few of the super mobiles and groups out there, too, to keep things interesting. Maybe one or two will be on a quest to get to all the counties this coming year. Don, K3IMC was the last to finish up on that.

## On the Road with N4CD I

The County Hunter News had been put to press at the end of November – time for another quick trip. Looking at the map, it quickly dawned on me there weren't any new parks to run within 800 miles, so I'd do a repeat of some park units for a quick trip. Folks still needing parks, despite a dozen activation and 1000 QSOs or more from each of them. Plus, of course, there would be counties to run along the way.

I packed up the car for a up to a week trip and headed out. Thursday - First stop was Forth Smith AK – about 250 miles up the road from my QTH through Oklahoma. Not much to report out of the ordinary – went well, ran the counties going up. Got up to Fort Smith – which is in Fort Smith, AR and sat there a few hours.

The NPOTA folks are on a big push to try and finish up with a bang. The total QSOs entered into LoTW were over 900,000 and the push was to get that number up to 1,000,000 QSOs for the NPOTA program by the end of the year, when it ends. I'd try and add in a bunch of QSOs if I could. Got there about 11 am. Another activator, W7ISG, Ingrid, was there at 9am in the morning while I was still headed that way. We

missed each other by a few minutes- she was headed west in her motor home at 11 am headed to her QTH in AZ via a half dozen more parks. . (YL mobile for those keeping track). This park had already had nearly 2000 QSOs made with two dozen previous activations. However, a few new folks show up – some getting in late in the game like Mike, WOMU.

Fort Smith is an old cavalry post – you've got a few of the original buildings still standing . There's a good parking lot but you've got some QRN from local power lines, and it is in 'the city' so it's OK but not great. You can run it with a 'two fer' for the Cherokee Trail of Tears water route – TR12. Back when, when the Native Americans were forced from GA to the reservation in OK, one of the routes was along the rivers – including the one that passes by the fort. As civilization and the frontier moved west, this fort was abandoned and no longer needed. There are dozens and dozens of old forts you can visit from the way back days – some preserved a lot better than others. 250 QSOs went into the log. I left after 3 hours to head up to near Fayetteville, AR (Super 8 motel) for the night. Darkness comes early this time of year and the further east you go in the time zone, the earlier sunset happens. Dinner was at a Golden Corral a few miles away.

Next morning, Friday, after the breakfast at the Super 8, the route headed up to Pea Ridge Military Park – MP07 -near the AR/MO border. Here, over 2000 QSOs were previously made, but some newcomers still needed it, and others were helping out to run up the QSO total toward the one million goal. Would we reach it? NPOTA would have to make more contacts in the last month than in any month before and the weather wasn't as favorable. I added in another 250 before heading out to the next site. You can also be right on part of the 'Trail of Tears' TR-12 and give it out as a two fer. The main tour route goes along part of the 'telegraph road' – and there are several pull offs there to run it from. Those 'Historic Trails' you can run mobile. Meanwhile, others were out and about all over the country – with the big push to a million Qs. I'd catch a few of them and work them 'park to park'.

This was also one of the stops on the Butterfield Overland Mail Route – that carried mail and provided once a week stage coach service from Memphis and St Louis to San Francisco for a short time. Fort Bowie out in present day AZ was another stop along the way. There were over 100 stops on the route, but few exist today in any recognizable form. A tavern here from the way back days was a stopping point. You probably didn't want to use the stage – one of the travelers back then commented:

Albert Richardson wrote: “the dining room was full of flies...rooms ill furnished...towels missing , pitchers empty and bed and table linen seeming to have been dragged through

the pond and dried upon gridirons”. Meals typically included bacon or fat pork 'floating in gravy”, sour milk, cornbread served in 'questionable shapes” and coffee. When the railroad was completed a few years later.....it went bankrupt. It lasted just a bit longer than the Pony Express.

Not too far north in southern MO is another interesting park unit – George Washington Carver -MN39 - grew up here on a plantation and went on later to found the famous Tuskegee Institute in AL. The 'peanut man' who was skilled in agriculture science and worked hard to improve crop yield and farming practices in the south, and find new uses for southern crops. I pulled in and operated for over an hour. A park worker came by (it was chilly outside) and said 'You need a SUP - special use permit – to do ham radio from here. ' OK.....He said go inside and they'd fix me up. Took 15 minutes – filled out some quick paperwork and got an SUP to keep doing what I'd been doing before. Only 3 or 4 cars in the entire lot for 100, so the antenna stood out. I'd been here once before with a few dozen other cars in the lot, and wasn't hassled. No one noticed back then. Did my 250 or so QSOs and headed on out to the next park for the day. I'd try to squeeze in three, but that doesn't leave much time with the short days. Some parks also close at 4 or 5pm.

Next up was Wilson's Creek Battlefield, BF11. Got here 2040Z - 2pm – making good time. It's over by Springfield, MO. Did 160Q – 20m died around 3pm. 30M cw and 40 worked out OK. This park has also been well run – not far off the interstate and close by a big city. However, with the push to a million QSOs, folks were working all they could hear, plus a few newcomers made it worthwhile to be there.

That night I headed to a Super 8 in Nixa, MO a few miles away. Dinner at a Mexican place 1/2 mile away from the motel – it was already getting dark.

There are more people around on Saturdays – so I'd head toward a needed park – RV05 – Ozark River on this day. I'd never been there before. This 'river' spreads like a skinny octopus over half a dozen counties and at least 100 miles in MO – so you have a few different spots to try and find a spot to run it. There's not a whole lot of roads that cross it and much of it is in real wild territory. You've got to be within 100 feet of the river itself to count for NPOTA.

I looked for the closest spot that would seem to work – trying to plan ahead - and did find a nice 'boat launch' spot in Texas County MO on route 16. You never know, however, what it will be like till you get there. Like county lines – you can plot them, plan to run them, then arrive and find S9 plus 40 noise from criss-crossing power lines ruining your plan A. This worked out OK – middle of nowhere, no power line, and

easy to get within 100 feet of the river. Some blockage to the south from a ridge but overall not bad.

Did 180Q from there – decent but not perfect spot. Radio conditions were 'fair' – we're getting a lot of that these days as indicated on the propagation banners on various web pages. Sunspots are going down, down, down for the next couple years. Many days are 'poor' on 40m with disturbed conditions.

After a nice visit there (lonely – saw only two other cars in 3 hours there) I headed back down into AR – a long long drive down to Little Rock Central School – NS-45. . Got there late in the afternoon at 2149Z (nearly 4pm) so had to have a quick run. This location had not reached 1000Q yet. I don't like night driving. Whipped out 160Qs from there. Still took 2 hours. After sunset. Not much on 20M at that time of day so it's all 30 and 40m cw and SSB.

With the location right in the middle of the city, you've got bad QRN – S5 to S9 depending upon the band. I did some 40M SSB at this one – stuck on the mag mount and hamstick for that band.. 20M was flakey already at that time of day. This was my 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> visit. It's finally over 1,000 QSOs from that park unit. This is where the first test of integration of a high school took place back in the 1960s.

Headed out in darkness, got to the interstate and headed southwest toward home.

Stopped at one of my favorite Super 8 motels in Brantley AR 30 miles away. Gloomy winter weather. Yuk. Wandered out 1/2 mile to a Mexican food place then back to the motel. Definitely a chill in the air. Temps in the 30s.

Sunday the car headed to Hot Springs National Park NP30 - – 90 minutes away. Here you head up to Monument Tower and a very nice operating spot high above the city. For some bucks, you can ride up the nice observation tower up 200 plus feet looking out over the city and surrounding area. This was my 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> visit here. Some newcomers still needed it – and some old timers that just hadn't caught it during the week or previously on a weekend or evening. 200 more Q into the log. Some folks worked me for the county – and some just to help run up the total as well. Headed out about noon time for the five hour drive to home. The quest for 1 million total QSOs continues.

Once home, uploaded the logs to LogBook of the World (LoTW) and hoped this would help send the counter over to 1,000,000. It takes a few days for the wheels to turn at ARRL HQ on these stat calculations.

It took till Dec 10 or so for the counter to finally reach 1,002,400 Qs with everyone trying! Yeah! Goal reached long before Dec 31! Maybe it will run up to 1.1 million NPOTA QSOs. As of 12/19, it's up to 1,013,588. Not sure we'll make 1.1 million. Things are slowing down with snow, blizzards, 30 below zero weather and the coldest winter cold snap in decades for this time of year. 16 deg average temperature across the country! Brrr!

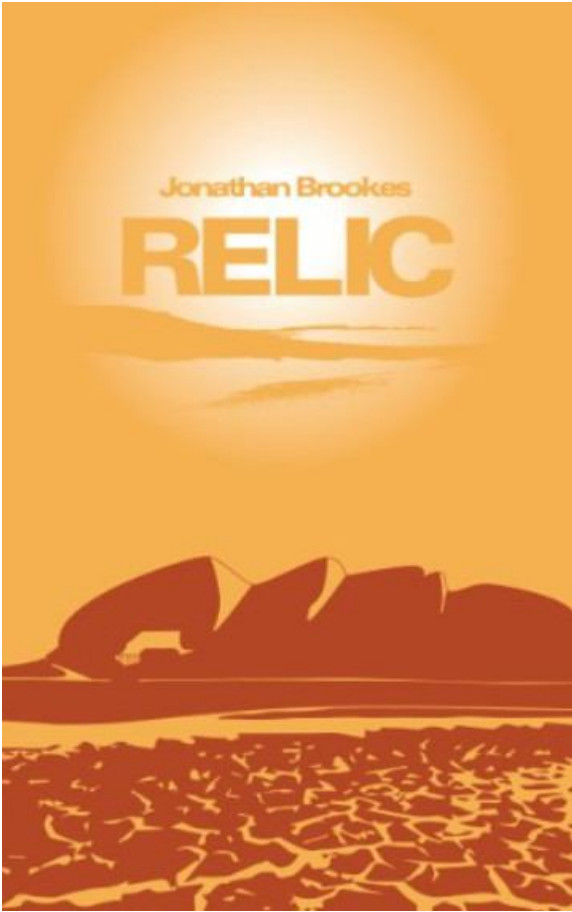
Unfortunately, there is nothing planned by ARRL to replace the National Parks on the Air program. Dang. It sure was a fun ride.

Thanks for riding along with me – 45,000 miles of driving. 37,500 NPOTA QSOs and thousands and thousands of county hunter contacts from counties in between parks. A good dozen or more County Hunters were putting out the parks and having fun. Mike, WOMU just got into the action in the last month and is racking up parks quickly – still lots of activations going on , but the fun comes to a screeching halt on Dec 31.

But wait....there's still more time!

## Book Review of the Month

This month it's a current book we review – has some radio content – not a whole lot but enough to classify it as a 'radio oriented book'. But don't read it for the radio content – there's not a whole lot.



---



From a synopsis by the author:

Relic is a fast paced science fiction thriller that explores the possibility of resurrecting and weaponizing an extinct species (Neanderthals). Imagine a scenario in which some rogue, black-ops faction of the military attempts to clone Neanderthals in order to create a superior soldier. This rogue military group, working with a military contractor, inadvertently unleash a past that should have remained extinct. The intriguing storyline shares some fascinating anthropological and biological insights and explores the social and moral issues of such a project, as well as worst case scenarios of a covert military project gone awry.

Fueled by cutting edge biotechnology, in a world where Dr. Strangelove politics and Jurassic Park science collide, the military embarks on a desperate project to seek out and destroy enemy combatants on their home turf.

Disturbingly close to the truth, Relic describes a world in which human soldiers are replaced with something much deadlier, and much more uncontrollable, with consequences that could spell the end of humanity as we know it.”

- - -

One of the chief scientists, held captive by his 'employer' manages to get a message out from the super secret secure facilities using Morse code and ham radio – and it all ends.

Available on the ARRL web site – and other fine book sellers.

## On the Road with N4CD II

The car had been sitting in the garage for over a week. It was time to do a quick road trip down to McLennan County and the Waco Mammoth Site – MN81 again. A major milestone had just been reached – over ONE MILLION QSOs uploaded to LoTW for the NPOTA program! One million! The big push was over and the goal reached in mid December with two weeks to spare. Now maybe we could reach 20,000 activations? The counter stood at 18,500. Who knows? It would be tough.

Well, there wasn't much going on at the QTH so why not help? I filled up the car with gas and headed down to the local MacDonalds for a quick breakfast of Egg White McMuffin and senior decaf coffee, then onto the major highway US75 down through Dallas. It was in the 60s, with a light drizzle rain at times, but no traffic hassles as it was a Saturday. Don't try this during the week or the 30 minute trip to downtown will take you 2 hours plus. Once you reach downtown you get on I-35 all the way to Waco, and if no accidents – a 2 hour trip or so down that way.

Just 2 hours later I pulled into the Waco Mammoth Site and parked in the grass area 500 feet inside the gate. It was overcast and 70 degrees at 9am. Over the next three hours I filled in 250 contacts into the log from McLennan County/MN81 – not rare at all but a few folks had indicated they needed it. The Canadian and European RAC contest was going on – so I worked a few of them to run up the totals – from VE1 to VE8. No Maritime was heard or VO1. Best DX was IK1GPG – a park hunter, and CU3AA in the Azore Islands – another park hunter. I'd been at this site at least 3 times before but it was a decent day to be on the radio. There were half a dozen 'park to park' contacts – nothing too rare- folks out on the Appalachian Trail in GA, on the Blue Ridge Parkway, etc. The weather back east was not good. Ice and snow in DC, PA and north. Accidents all over the place in CT and NYC – and travel advisories keeping folks at home.

Plus, with the goal of 1 million QSO's reached, others were resting on their records – and doing holiday shopping, honey do's, etc. Do you remember the days when you'd do a quick 50-60 or so county hunter contacts in 10 or 12 minutes, then get moved off frequency and do another 30-40? Those were the county hunting days. Now, maybe you do 20 or 30. With the parks, most of the time you can do one hundred or more if you stay a while and are not way out west in the mountains. The further west you go, the tougher it is these days with propagation to work east and Europe DX.

By noon the temperature got up to 80 degrees and the sun popped out a few times. No complaints. By 12:30, I'd pretty well worked out the band – so time to get home before the big chill hit. The weather forecast was plummeting temps – going down 50 plus degrees to the low 20s or below – with 30 mph winds and near zero windchill. Up in MN it was already 20 below. The Siberian Express was doing a number on the northern part of the US and snow records were being broken as well. Ah, it's not even 'winter' officially yet.

Maybe 20 county hunter contacts went in the log. K7TM, WQ7A, WD4OIN, K4YT, K4YFH, WA4EEZ, N0KV, W8TZA, and a few others. Not many takers on 30cw. Then again, I've run this over and over in the past year and McLennan County is on the way

to the twice a year Bell County Hamfest, too.

Well, home by 4pm. Gassed up the car – 241 miles – 8.5 gal of gas including 3 hours idling at the park. A good day trip but nothing new county wise. 45,000 miles on the new Malibu – all this year.

The NPOTA program ends at the end of the year.....it was great for stimulating mobile activity. Who knows what's next? No big program announced by the ARRL. NPOTA officially ends Dec 31. Withdrawal symptoms start Jan 1.

I'll have to look at the hamfest schedule to see where to head next. Dayton for sure. The MI Mini is on the radar along with the Colorado National. Orlando?

## Mobile Activity in December

Activity was fairly light this month, but with holidays, winter weather over much of the USA, and not so great propagation, most days only saw a handful of mobiles. Some days less. We could sure use a boost in activity!! Starting at the beginning of December:

K0DEQ,Bill, was putting out counties in MO. Nice to see him out mobile. He's been a very busy chaser for many years. He was out on a multi-day trip in MO.

Kerry, W4SIG was on the road putting them out in TN and MS

K0MAF ran a few in MO. Then headed on down through AL to FL. Later in the month he'd head north again.

N2MH was active in NC.

Barry, N0KV and Pat N0DXE ran counties in TX – and headed back home to CO via NM. .

Jim, N9JF, noted out and about in IL. Later he would head over to IN.

W3DQT noted in a few in MD and PA.

Jim, N4JT, noted running counties mult-mode in NC.

KZ2P/N2FPM noted in a dozen counties in SC.

Barry, K2MF, spotted in FL counties.

Scott, KA3QLF noted in PA counties out and about. Then over through NY to MA. Later in the month he'd be on the road again.

K0DEQ was out on another trip around MO in mid month

N4UP ran counties in VA.

Mike, KA4RRU, ran some in VA.

Doug, WA4UNS, ran some counties in NC. Later he'd be up in MD.

Seth, N3MRA, spotted in AL.

Ed, K8ZZ, was on the road in IL and IN and MI.

AF5CC ran a few from OK to IA.

W8FNW/W4FNW headed east out of WA state.

N7IV was on the road in ND.

KA2LHO spotted in GA.....

KJ8V/KJ8W noted in a few in MI and IN.

Bill, NU0Q, noted headed east – was in MO as of press time.

Bill, K2HVN on the road again in late December.

Most active mobiles this month? K0DEQ Bill, running many in MO on several serious county putting out trips and Jim N9JF, active at least 10 days during the month.

## On the Road with N4CD III

The weekend had arrived – and NPOTA fever was still with me. The weather was supposed to be half decent – drizzle but warm on Xmas day, so I figured I'd head north to Chickasaw National Recreation Area, RC05, up in Murray County OK. It's the second closest park to my QTH- 145 miles or so. I took the quick route up – through Love OK and Carter – on the interstate. Only had a few QSOs on 14336 with county hunters. Called and called but few takers. Most were off enjoying their day, in church, sleeping in after a hectic xmas eve, or just goofing off. No problem.

It drizzled on and off most of the way up, but the temps stayed right around 70. Road traffic was light. There were no trucks on the road.

I arrived at the boat launch area on a nice lake in the park about 10:30 and ran the bands. There's internet connectivity there so you can spot which helps a lot – especially on a quiet band. Not many QSO's going on – and most nets taking the day off – 20m sounded very quiet with just maybe 10 frequencies in use compared to wall to wall signals on a typical weekend day. Sat on 14.336 for a while. Didn't hear any other mobiles out there or any net control stations – worked a half dozen county hunters in the log – out of 161 total Qs. After Jan 1, all the activity on and around .336 will be over. Same for the rest of the bands – 40M will be half empty. Some days there were 10 or more simultaneous NPOTA stations on 20M trying to squeeze in here and there.

Best DX....UX1 and IK1.....but mostly US and Canada. W0GHZ was having an ice storm at his QTH in MN.....and snow was falling across the northern part of the USA making travel hazardous. VE5UX and I usually trade weather reports. He was enjoying 20 deg weather up there in SK – a nice warm spell. They'd been down to 20 and 30 below already.

After 2 1/2 lonely hours in the park (only car in 150 car parking lot for 3 hours).....with the windows down most of the time in the 70 deg weather – but wind blowing a good 20-30 mph all the time – it was time to go find some lunch in the nearby town of

Sulphur. Hmm...choice of Mexican restaurant, Poor Girls Cafe, or New China Buffet. Everything else locked up tight on xmas day. Picked the latter. Not bad. \$8.75 for a fairly quick lunch. Headed the car east and then south through Johnston and Atoka. Not many takers for the counties on 14.336. Hit TX and just ran sans radio the rest of the way home in light drizzle most of the way. Arrived home 4pm – where it was up to 80 degrees! Opened a few windows in the house and enjoyed the above normal temps. We go from 10 degrees below average to 10 above frequently as the cold and warm fronts move through.

National Parks on the Air has been a fun ride. I've made dozens and dozens of new friends. It's been an exciting group on the NPOTA web page and it's going to be a big let down come Jan 1. I've got county hunting to go back to....not sure what the other hundreds (if not thousands) are going to do. I've been trying to recruit a few for county hunting – but the lack of quick confirmation via LoTW and need for confirmation might discourage many from joining in. Many already probably have 500 or 800 counties confirmed in LoTW....but that currently doesn't count.

I don't know what could be done to make County Hunting as exciting. One of the great features of NPOTA is that the contacts are uploaded to LogBook of the World (LoTW) and you get confirmation through that system. No need for QSLs or MRCs. There's a leader board and score board. The LoTW keeps track of how many parks you've worked. Of course, there's only 489 parks – so that's a bunch easier – and there is no award for working all the parks. Some of them actually you can't work or visit!

There's no need for 'first timers' to have to get 3077 confirmations – it's all done through the system. It uses 'trusted certificates' so only the person holding the certificate can upload a file – thus reducing to near zero any fraud or going around the system. Maybe someday CQ and ARRL will get it working together. Right now, when you work stations, if they upload their county – you can see what county they were in. Not all in parks do put the county in.....and some parks in are multiple counties like Trail of Tears that goes through a dozen states! They're would be some headaches but maybe something could be worked out. One of the hassles for 'mobiles' is having a way to enter a log with multiple QTHs...so when you are on a trip, and go through 100 counties, you don't have to set up '100 station locations'. And LoTW doesn't understand 'county lines' even though it understands 'two fers and multiples' where you are in two parks at the same time. Hi hi.

Well....NPOTA got me onto LoTW for the year long event. Not sure how much more I'll use it. Maybe I'll upload some contests where I make a few Qs. It does keep track of your prefix count for WPX.....but no way to search or get a listing of what you've

worked. You can qualify for the first award at 500 prefixes through LoTW. This year I've worked/confirmed 529 different prefixes in the system, enough for the first level award from CQ Magazine.

The ARRL IT budget is likely strained after a year of NPOTA. Nothing is in the works until 2018 according to rumors – for new program to replace NPOTA. You've got a year off. Meanwhile, you can be working on ARRL Triple Play (working all states on 3 modes – cw, SSB, data) via LoTW.....

Thanks for riding along. Maybe one more park or so this year if the weather cooperates. This time last year we were having tornadoes – and an EF4 set down 20 miles away in Garland TX.....so you never know....

de N4CD

## On the Trail of Regens

Other activities have kept me fairly busy this year. NPOTA fever sent me here, there and just about everywhere not leaving much time to continue the search for new and nifty regen units – whether production, or kits, or homebrew.

Recently, an outfit in Russia has been selling kits (either PC boards or kits with all the parts) of the MFJ kit receiver (a clone) and some of the other previous radios. Also selling kits for direct conversion receivers and small SSB transceivers as well. The prices look reasonable. It's like someone reversed engineered the PC boards and will sell you a clone - for about the same price.

One item went by on Ebay – a four tube homemade unit that looked decent.



Well shielded with separate RF and power supply sections and enough audio to run a regular speaker.



It came with a full set of coils.

Not much else except the same things over and over show up. However, if you aren't checking, the one day you don't, a super rare thing goes off on a 'buy it now' deal and it's history.

I'm not finding much at hamfests or at antique wireless meets either. One of these days I've got to get started on fixing some of the units I acquired – some will take a lot of work as 50-60 year old radios sometimes need almost a total rebuilt from bad caps,



corroded ground points, etc.

In 2017, I'll probably have a bit more time to devote to hunting down things – if they are out there!

## The Year End NPOTA Review

Year 2016 was a fantastic year for activity here at the N4CD QTH/Mobile. What started out as a somewhat interesting idea turned out to be a great idea spurring over 45,000 miles of driving through 40 different states through 800 plus counties – 'putting out the parks'. Over 37,000 QSOs from the parks were logged and uploaded to LoTW.

In the ham community, about 20,000 'activations' by hundreds of portables and mobiles all around the country (including AK, HI, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico) occurred during the year. Sales of portable rigs, batteries, loop antennas, and accessories skyrocketed! There were 5,000 people on the NPOTA Facebook page. By the end of the year, over ONE MILLION NPOTA QSOs had occurred and been uploaded to LoTW. That's some pretty amazing numbers. The ARRL Centennial, with various states on the air for a week at a time with big signals and often multi-op operations, was popular, but this blew it away.

After putting the 'interesting articles' in the December 2015 and January 2016 issues of the County Hunter News, I waded into getting set up on LogBook of the World. All of the NPOTA activity would go through LoTW. Since I normally don't use computer logging – such as N1NN for contests, which generate easy to upload ADIF files, it was a 'learning experience' getting the computer set up with the required 'certificate' for the secure LoTW system. It took a few tries and some headaches to finally get things set up and running. I expected that I might go run a few parks but had no idea of how much activity there would be. Would there just be dozens doing it or more? Would anyone actually be 'chasing'? Would it be a waste of time, gas, and motels?

For those that didn't get into the 'game', there were two categories for NPOTA. There

were the 'activators' who went to the various parks and made contacts from them, and there were the 'chasers' who tried to work people who were in the various parks – up to 489 by the end of the year. A few new ones were created in 2016! You can still upload your logs and get credits for contacts (and nice certificates for working Xx number of parks or activating them) until Jan 31 for contacts made in 2016.

For the first trip in Jan 2016, I loaded up the car for a trip around TX. If nothing else, I'd run 40 or 50 counties down to Big Bend National Park and then back home. Folks always seem to need those SW Texas counties like Presideo, Brewster, Crane, Reagan, etc.

The first site I would try would be the closest – Waco Mammoth National Monument in Waco, TX – about 120 miles south of the QTH. On January 7, the N4CD mobile arrived there. OK...now what do I do? Found a frequency on 20M SSB and called CQ NPOTA, spotted myself, and waited to see what would happen. I started out making 200 contacts from the park in a few hours! Hey, this was going to be fun. Even better, I'd driven by this park (it was a state park up until 2015) many times before and never stopped by, so I finally got to learn about it. Cool! How many park units or sites have you driven past? Probably many dozens.

Not only did I put many county hunters in the log, but there were lots of new calls I never worked before. Hundreds of them. It's nice to be 'wanted'. Most folks were cooperative, but I did have to get used to folks calling with phonetics and some serious pile ups at times. Left there and headed to Blanco County.

Next up was the LBJ Home site in Johnson City – and did 250 QSOs from there in 3 hours or so. More fun! I hadn't made that many contacts running counties in a decades – if that. . Other than HI and AK – you'd be lucky these days to make 30-40 at most stops. Some days you eek out 8 or 10 from a county. After that park – it was down to Big Bend National Park. Whoa.....over 350 QSOs went into the log. More than 100 Qs made on 17m alone! (wasn't it nice when 17m was doing well?). This is fun!

OK..next up was Ft Davis. I'd been by this location driving through – never stopped – so now was the time to see it...and operate from it. A couple hundred Qs went into the log. I was going through many other counties – but only getting 15 to 25 total Qs including all the bands from each of the counties. It was obvious to me that much of the fun in 2016 would now be running parks – at least until most had been run a few times. Who knows what would happen then? Burnout? Less interest? How long would the fun last? Would folks disappear after they had the parks?

After Big Bend and Ft Davis, the car wound it's way back home and I had to actually get the contacts correctly uploaded to LoTW with the right 'station locations' of the park. Figured it out and that was the beginning. I was using TSQL to input each QSO by hand from the paper log.

After that – it was trips all over the country to 262 park 'entities'.....the initial goal was 50 different parks. Well...that came quickly....so it was then “I'll run maybe 100 parks in 2016'....by summer I was there - so I just kept on going. Naturally, there were dozens of trip reports in the County Hunter News with lots of pictures from the various sites.

The most fun of all was being the 'first' to activate a park. Some were a bit challenging. One, Chamizal, in El Paso TX had a few 'issues' it had to work out, but I was fortunate to be the first to get a Special Use Permit to operate from there. Cool. Of course, it's 650 miles from home – and I did a special trip there and back just to be able to do it and be first! Well, I hit two or three others on the way there and back – no sense wasting all those miles! The site is in downtown El Paso – noisy as heck – but you take what you get. It's only been run a few times since. Less than 2 miles off the interstate – and I'll bet 200 county hunters just cruised on by – including me – before this event.

Another 'first' was the Clinton Boyhood Home in Hope AR. This you had to run portable. No one had stepped up to it yet – and N4CD was able to get the first Special Use Permit to set up on their front yard picnic table and 'put out the park'. It took some parks a while to set up their requirements for radio operation. In this case, the park was coordinating with others in the State of AR, and I just timed it right. I was running QRP 5W to an Alex Loop and made over 100Qs. Tougher than a mobile set up but there was no place to put a car on this 3 residential lot 'park'. The third memorable first was the Devil's Postpile in California. Some of these sites were very cautious about 'portable operations' or multi-operator events – and had denied groups access already. Chamizal was one. This was another I was able to score the first SUP by being a 'self contained' single operator mobile. There was great concern about the location of this site – being in a deep valley with large mountains to the east – as to whether signals would even get out from there. The day came, N4CD came over the checkpoint at 9100 feet down a teeny one lane access road into the park – and it worked out decently with over 200Qs into the log. That was in the summer. By then, most but not all the parks had been activated.....

Bob, N8KIE, also had a bunch of NPOTA fun. He was the first to run Kalawao...an 'historic place' – and put it out. He was also the second to gain access to Rosie the Riveter site in San Francisco area. Jim, N9JF did a bunch of parks, and Mike, KA4RRU, kept the DC/NOVA parks off the 'wanted list' with many activations. Bill,

K2HVN did some back east. Barry, N0KV, hit a dozen or more. A lot of county hunters missed out on most of the fun of activating, though. Not sure why. Maybe not being on LoTW was a factor?

Once upon a time in Arizona, I was zipping along a main road. With my big antenna on the car, it's sort of obvious to another ham that I'm a ham. I get passed by a Prius, and the lady holds up a QSL card – NA6L. Seems I recognize that call. I dig out one of my own QSL cards while zipping along and hold it up. Half mile up the road, we both pull off and have an eyeball in the 113 deg temps that day. John, NA6L, goes to the various parks, puts a full length vertical on a mag mount on top of his car, with a full length radial, and operates that way. Usually has a good signal. After a 10 minute 'on the road' eyeball QSO, we head on out. Sort of like meeting a county hunter along the road, that happened a dozen or so times on my various trips here and there. Fun! I did meet a ton of park hunters at Dayton. Some stopped by the CH Forum – before and after meet and greet – and probably 100 were at the ARRL Forum on Saturday. More fun!

Even with all the portables and mobiles, a few sites weren't put on the air until December of 2016! Peter, K0BAK, master activator from PA, finally got permission to set up for just 1 1/2 hours at the Statue of Liberty in NY harbor. Had to pay a \$200 fee for the SUP which included a 'baby sitter' NPS person meeting him at the ferry, direct him to where he could set up the portable station, and monitoring his operation from beginning to end. Horrendously noisy site there and only time to get 50 or so in the log

Others, including building sites in Philadelphia, finally made it on the air – with K0BAK and the 'super stooper station' and some 'rooftop' operations.

Some amazing things happened. Emily, KB3VVE, had never made a CW contact in her ham life. She set about learning the code with another activator.....and by the end of the year she was activating sites on CW at near 20 wpm. Many others re-learned their code or learned it for the first time to work the parks. Emily is known as the Cookie Lady – as she rewarded a few of the park hunters/chasers with home made delicious cookies.

Some got on the air with stealth 'after hours' operation from the 'stoop' of the facility. Ford's Theater in DC finally made it on the air with an after hours operation from the stoop– that, unfortunately set off the fire alarm in the building by RFI, but operator managed to disappear before a dozen fire trucks and other vehicles came. Adventures. It would be run again. A few building sites in NYC never made in on the air – just a building with no access – some not even open to the public at this time. Hams tried to get nearly all on the air – but some just didn't work out. Worse, even if you got permission, the noise level in Manhattan is 30 to 40 over S9 at street level! (been there

– heard the noise myself as I drove through Manhattan.!).

Some sites, such as Wing Luke in downtown Seattle, made it on the air only one time. It's an urban site with S8 noise – but two older hams persevered and did 200Q from the site. Devil's Postpile was on five times, the Clinton Home six or seven times. Other sites like the Appalachian Trail, Mormon , Oregon, California trails were on hundreds of times! Some were run QRP with small antennas – making it challenging for the west coast to catch it. All part of the game – like county hunting.

There was lots to see along the way. Most of the sites I visited were new to me. I was lucky in my teenage years the family would go camping all over the country on vacations and we got to see most of the large national parks back then. So I could skip sightseeing for the most part at places like Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce, etc – and that was good since most had horrific tourist back ups and traffic jams. I'd just hit a bit of the park, run it, and head on out.

Many of the park hunters succeeded in working over 400 of the various parks, with the top dogs catching 460 of them.(out of 489) Over a dozen parks in AK were never on the air – you can only get to them with a float plane. Several others have 'ham radio forbidden' or 'access forbidden' so those couple were off limits. Larry, K5RK, let the list with 460 worked. If it was on the air for an activation, he worked it.

On the activator side, 30 people did 100 different activations. To get credit for an activation, you'd have to make at least 10 contacts from the park. Some of the QRP folks and others did 'hit and run' type deals – others spent hours (and some days camping in the parks) putting them out. The top activator did 500 different activations. (If you do a two fer or 3 or 5 fer , you get credit for 2 or 3 or 5 different activations). It helped that much of DC is 'two fers' – and a half dozen 3 fers such as the GW Parkway and two trails that run along it! And he lived a few miles away. Hi hi. Not much in the way of two fers in TX and around the country in general. N4CD wound up in second place for activations with 334 as of 12/28. Whew! Several others were over 300 including one YL. (That's lots of traveling and my nearest park is over 110 miles away! ) Others lived in motor homes and just traveled all over.

It's been fun. 2017 is likely be a let down from the 'rush' of NPOTA. It's back to county hunting and state QSO parties for me. Maybe Winter Field Day might be interesting. ARRL has nothing for 2017. Next big event might be in 2018.

What will you be doing in 2017?

# Operating Events for County Hunters

It's the New Year – and we have the first QSO Party of the Year – in Montana. Not a good time for mobiles out there, but usually a few fixed stations show up and make a lot of contacts. Maybe we'll get a few more on this year – worked a dozen stations in MT for NPOTA.

Winter Field day may be interesting. NPOTA has spurred lots of portable operation – with many getting stations just to run the various park units as a portable – including along the many trails where portable operation is required. Could be fun if hundreds go out in the field.

The North American QSO Parties are good – lots of contacts – but one must be cautious as many operate as 'guest operators' not in their home counties.

Jan 14 1800z to 15 0559z

**North American QSO Party, CW**

NA: Name, SPC. Non-NA: Name

[www.ncjweb.com/NAQP-Rules.pdf](http://www.ncjweb.com/NAQP-Rules.pdf)

Jan 21 1800z to 22 0559z

North American QSO Party, SSB

NA: Name, SPC. Non-NA: Name

[www.ncjweb.com/NAQP-Rules.pdf](http://www.ncjweb.com/NAQP-Rules.pdf)

Jan 28 1900z to 29 1900z

Winter Field Day

CW Ph Dig

Category, ARRL Section or “DX”

[winterfieldday.com/rules.html](http://winterfieldday.com/rules.html)

Jan 28 0000z to 28 2359z

Montana QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

RS(T), county or SPC

[fvarc.org](http://fvarc.org)

Long Range Planning – save the dates

**2017 MARAC Michigan Mini**

**QTH: Traverse City, MI**

**Dates: April 27, 28, 29, 2017**

**2017 MARAC National Convention**

**QTH: Colorado Springs, CO**

**Dates: September 25,26,27 2017**

That's all this month.