

County Hunter News

July 1, 2014
Volume 9, Issue 7

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

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

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 . Please check it out.

Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at 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)

Notes from the Editor

1) N4CD Rumbings

This issue is a little bit late – N4CD has been off traveling for a few weeks and I'm not up to writing this 'on the road' and the other articles in more detail. They just have to wait for me to be at my desktop. I guess that's about the first time in 10 years so I'm not going to sweat it. Lots to tell in the N4CD On the Road column this month. Meanwhile lots of other mobiles have been off on trips and traveling and vacations so we'll try to trace all the activity and report on it.

2) With a little help from his friends

Larry, W0QE, lamented on the K3IMC forum that he was down to 3 to finish up for the fifth time CW and hadn't been able to dig out contacts for 3 counties: Watauga, NC, Stanly, NC, and Johnson, TX. Turns out they'd all been run in the past 90 days (two by Jimmy, K4YFH on CW, one by N4CD on cw), but Larry didn't snag them. So...it didn't take long before the posting before those counties wound up in his log with a 'little help from his friends'.

Turns out WA4UNS lives in Watauga. That's why it helps to check the MARAC database base under 'states' to see if there are county hunters living there. Sometimes that works. Or maybe you find one a county over from what you need.

Several suggested W4DXE for Stanly. He's on QRZ, operates from 160 through 23 GHz and others have had skeds with him. Well, that was two quickly in the log. Then Don, N5XG, indicated he would be in Johnson TX in a few days and a sked was set up. He lives in the adjacent county. Otherwise, it would be a 2 hour trip for N4CD to get over there and get it. Not a problem.

So those 'elusive counties' went from 3 to 0 in less than 10 days with a 'little help from his friends'.

If you are closing in.....it's time to ask around for ways to get you there. When you are under 10, let folks know. Folks want to get others finished off!

On the Road with N4CD – Part 1

For the trip planning, I ran into a glitch or two. Normally I don't drag a back up radio along with me as the trusty IC706 just keeps chugging along. I suspect it could use a bit more gain on 17m and up. The newer 706 Mark II had an extra six dB of pre amp gain and that would come in handy for the trip. I had acquired an old “new” 706 Mark II a

long time ago - was never used by the original owner. It came with a new in the box with a 350 Hz CW filter, so first order of business was to install that in the radio, then check it out. If you have a spare, you'll never need it.....or that seems to be what has happened for me.

So I checked it on the bench into a dummy load after programming in the county hunter frequencies. So far so good. Then I decided to give it an 'air test' and headed up to the local park (hopefully quieter than my driveway) and operate on the cw and SSB frequencies.

I get up to the park, fire up the radio with the normal mobile antenna.....and it seems fine on 20M. Go over to 17m cw...works OK....then try 20 ssb. Works OK and get good reports. Then go to 17m SSB. What's this? Key up on SSB and meter pegs, then drops back to zero...and seems to work. I turn on the compressor...and as soon as I talk it pins. Hmm...think this radio has the IC706 Mark II flakely – it likes to oscillate and be unstable on 17 and 15m. Or have intermittent 'power out' or unstable power out readings. Likely splattering all over too.

If you had this problem when you first bought the radio, ICOM would fix it free. Well, that time has long past. Larry, W0QE has a 'fix' for the problem and Phil, AD5X posted a similar fix – and both are pretty simple. They both provide a better grounding of a sensitive point that is not well connected to ground.

The AD5X fix is located at:

<http://www.ad5x.com/images/Presentations/IC706InstabilityRevA.pdf>

It requires a #4 solder lug (that's a lug for a #4 screw- fairly small) and a short piece of wire to ground one point on the circuit board.

The W0QE fix uses a small piece of brass or copper – soldered to the same point, but making contact via the screw that holds the cover to the radio. Larry says he's fixed 4 or 5 IC706s this way.



I can send you high res picture if you have the problem and need the fix.

You can buy small sheets of thin brass or copper at Hobby Lobby and similar stores. \$4 or \$5, or you can hunt up a #4 solder lug (mail me if you need one) – DigiKey stocks them.

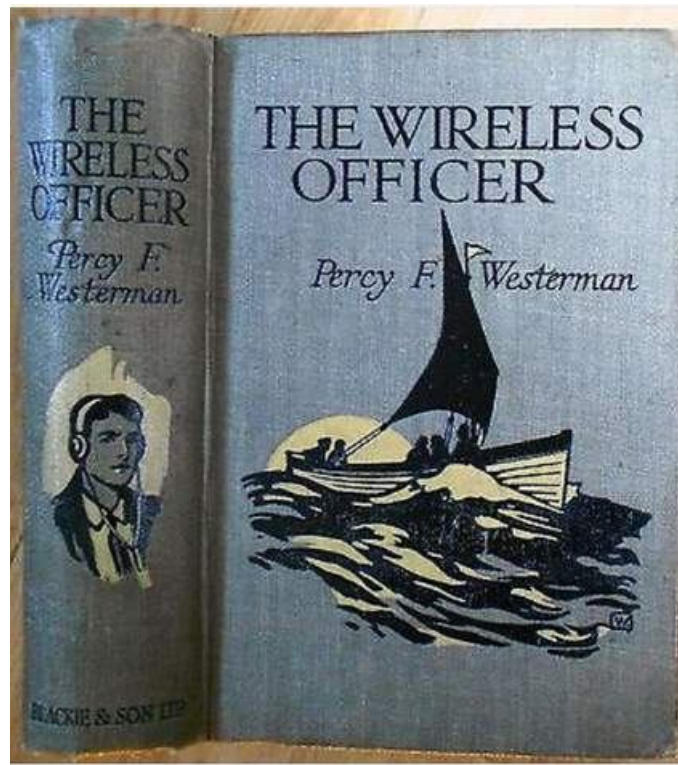
So.....did it fix the problem? Seems to have fixed it NOT. Still flakey. But I got too much stuff to take to AK, and the 'back up radio' isn't going. And not enough time.

Now to test out the old mobile DX antenna- a bit over 7 feet of mast with 20/17/15 resonators for the trip to AK. Plus spares.

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Well, as it turns out, I had too much stuff getting to AK....between the mag mount, the radio and accessories, cable, masts, resonators.....I was way to heavy for me to be lugging around another heavy radio. The spare radio sat at home. I'll worry about it when I get home. When you head to AK, you need to bring long pants, flannel shirts, and a ski jacket. It can be freezing cold there! Or darn close to it.

Book Review of the Month



The Wireless Officer by **Percy F Westerman**, date around 1918

This month it's off to Merry Olde England and a tale from Percy Westerman. This is one of the better 'reads' and you might enjoy it. It's available in many forms as an E-book to download at the link at the end. The date is around 1917-1918.

The war has just ended and the demand for wireless operators has dropped tremendously. During the war, there were hundreds of ships pressed into service, but after the war, commerce was down. Not many ships are being chartered. A good bit of 'wealth' was destroyed during the WW1 period so economies are not very good.

Peter finally gets an assignment on a 'second rate' ship chartered to haul a load of iron to build a bridge in a British Protectorate in Africa. The ship has wireless, and he is assigned as the chief wireless operator, having had sea experience already during the war. To save money, rather than 2 operators, they have resorted to two 'watchers' who can barely copy code and are unfamiliar with procedures, but will 'listen in' and try to hear only priority calls (calls with a TTT at the beginning like iceberg warnings) or SOS signals, then alert the regular operator who spends 12 hours a day at the radio. This is the era of spark and range is 250-300 miles during the day to a shore station and maybe up to 500-600 at night with the right 'atmospherics'.

Of course, a competitor is very upset when the English firm wins the award for the contract, and one nasty individual plans to sabotage the ship before it can deliver the bridge parts. He books passage on the ship under an assumed name. During the voyage, he manages to copy the 'code book', located in the captains quarters, in which all company messages are sent. He plans to send a bogus message after he has left the ship, and plant a bomb, so that the delivery does not happen by the contract date.

The ship lands in Cape Town, along the way. The saboteur leaves the ship but plants a bomb set to go off in a seven days while the vessel is at sea. He then sends a wireless message, in the company code he copied, telling the ship to head to a different port 10 days away and off load the steel bridge girders. Naturally, when decoded, the message is in the right code, and right sequence. No one questions it.

However, there is one error in copy, and the ship is routed to a different port 2 days away, where it offloads the steel in a tiny port with no means of communicating with the rest of the world. The day after it leaves, there is a massive explosion down below that sinks the ship in a few hours. The radio power is out except for low power transmissions off battery, but no one seems to hear their plea for help. They take to life boats. The message was heard and the world knows that the ship sunk for unknown reasons.

After a bunch of adventures, the wireless op and half a dozen others are finally picked up by the crew of a dhow. Others make it to other ports or are rescued. That night, the crew of the dhow attempts to murder them, but they are quick enough to overpower them, suffering injuries in the process. The crew of five is subdued and placed in a hold

down below and the vessel under Peter's control is sailed to the port that they should have sailed to originally.

The world thinks the ship they were on went down with a dozen casualties, but it turns out nearly everyone survived. When the company learns that the steel didn't go down with the ship, they quickly charter another ship to make the short trip to pick it up and bring it back, completing the contract on time.

Naturally, it helps to have a love interest, and Peter finally asks one of the passengers, Olive, who has been of great help, to be his wife. He's been offered a job in the Protectorate setting up wireless stations across it, and takes it.

It's a couple hour read, a good bit about wireless operators of the time and how things were done on board. Not bad at all and one of the better books I've read lately.

The Wireless Officer Westerman
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/37824/37824-h/37824-h.htm>

Westerman wrote about 20 books on subjects from service on submarines, to hunting down enemy subs, and other fiction.

On the Road with N4CD Part 2

This story is going to have lots of twists and turns, Hope you're ready for an interesting ride through the County Hunting Sphere.....

It was time to get back to AK to finish running up all counties for the second time. AK and HI were the only ones outstanding. Over the past 12 years, I'd been working on putting them out a second time, catching up with W1TEE who had done it twice.

Plus, a handful of people had worked all the counties for Mobile Diamond, except for

the 4 Alaska 'counties'. If I got myself to AK, and we had decent propagation, that would finish off those folks (K5GE, N4AAT, N5UZW, N4CD and N8KIE). We had all worked hard to get the missing counties for each other, leaving just the AK ones as 'never run for MD'. So I did a bunch of planning, made a lot of web searches, dug out some old stuff from the last trip there in 2002, and set up an itinerary to head to Anchorage (ANC) on the American Airlines one and only flight to AK – direct – then go hopping by Alaska Airlines to Nome (second district), and down to Juneau (First District). I'd spend a couple days in each of the 4 Judicial Districts, which county hunters use. There are no 'counties' or equivalent in AK. Things were put in place, reservations made and confirmed, charges put on the credit card. All set to go and I posted the trip for June about six weeks ahead of time.

Now....hold onto your hats....I bet you didn't know the next part.....

Not long after I posted my trip, I got a phone call from Gene, K5GE. Seems Gene had been planning a trip for months to AK. He was all set to leave in mid May – driving up to Vancouver, BC, taking a car ferry from Vancouver to Skagway along the inland waterway, getting off and then first 'putting out the First Judicial district, then driving up through Canada to get to the Fourth, up the haul road 330 plus miles (gravel) to Atigun Pass in the Second District, then down to the Third to complete putting them out for Mobile Diamond. That would be probably 4000 miles of driving....plus he'd have to get himself back and forth from TX, adding on another 4000-5000 miles. He had not posted this trip nor let a whole lot of people know about it. Well.....Gene and I talked a while. Yes, I was really going....had the plane tickets (non-refundable for the most part)....the car reservations.....and I was headed there.

If he did his trip, he'd be driving a long time up the Al-Can highway.....and more miles in AK – plus over 700 miles round trip on the haul road (gravel) which can be 'easy'...or hard. From the reports of those who have done it (N8KIE) recently, Barry, N0KV, - you've got a 50/50 chance of losing a windshield or other glass. When Ron, KB6UF and Darrel, W6TMD made their trip, they went through a tire...and needed the 4 wheel drive capability in places to drive on the road. During the summer, there can be hundreds of miles of 'road construction'. Rick, AI5P, did some plane hopping and car renting on his trip there.

After a bit of back and forth, Gene decided to cancel his trip before the 'have to commit date' and send in 'the rest of the money' date was reached. He was counting on N4CD to get to those counties for MD. I just had to be sure that I didn't screw up and not get to every one of those 'counties'.

As you are aware, Gene didn't want to risk the extra distance from his QTH in south TX to 'way up north'. That extra couple thousand miles might mean getting a contact or not. It's already 2000 miles from Nome to just get to Seattle Washington.....and another 2000 plus to TX from there. He went up to Terry, WQ7A, QTH and did a combination vacation trip with XYL to there, plus was at Terry's big station for the 4 needed contacts. Turned out well for all needed to finish.....conditions worked, Terry and Gene had good signals at all the locations, and we all reached the goal.

So.....things were off to an interesting start! The pressure was 'on'. N4CD was in the hot seat.

Continued in Part III.

Mobile Activity

W0GXQ headed back from CO through NE, SD, ND to MN.

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Phil, AB7RW noted about his last trip

Barbara drove most all of the way. We covered 5472 miles, putting out 146 counties netting 2064 contacts.

We had a nice long wait in Oregon, we were told it was an auto accident, but seen nothing when we passed where it was supposed to be. The next delay was after we got to Lewiston, WY, Interstate 80 was closed. Semi trucks were parked ever where along the interstate. We did not have a long wait and it was opened up again, The highway went from three lanes full of semis and a few cars, to two lanes and then one lane. We covered 11 miles at 3-6 mph. There were no more problems the rest of the way. Returning home, the highlight was our trip through Daggett, Utah. The scenery was gorgeous. 50 miles

from I - 80 and about 60 miles back to I-80. The colors of the walls of the lake are unbelievable. This is a fly fishing lake with catch and release.

The Dayton Hamvention was very interesting for our first visit. Ran into many friends from our many trips. The County Hunters Forum was also very interesting and informative.

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Larry, W7FEN headed east back to his summer home in CO.

Bob N8KIE made a nice loop down through KY, NC to GA and then back home again. He's working on getting his next time done with help from N8RLJ, the xyl. Ran only SSB.

Alan, KO7X headed to UT and back home again.

Jimmy, K4YFH continued his trek across the country through NE, SD, ND and points west. Said he might go to Anchorage, AK. Well, he did make it to the Fourth and Third Judicial districts. It was tough to hear him and heard about half a dozen calling and not sure how many made it through.

NC2Y ran a few in NJ/NY on cw. QRZ has his home county as Bergen NJ.

N7JPF reports:

“The quick trip to Wisconsin and back, completed today. Many thanks to so many people who helped on the air. We logged 4700 miles, and I put out 51 counties, 46 which were new counties for me. My last county line on Saturday morning, McKenzie ND/Richland MT was 45 SSB and 4 CW contacts, I think it is the most I have logged in one stop since giving out Fallon, MT a few years ago, and Wheeler, OR last year. It is great to hear that many people on the CH net! Got to get some equipment repaired now.... oh, and by the way, no deer accidents, but will need a new windshield. Lots of TRUCKS and gravel in NW North Dakota!”

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Bob K7TM ran a bunch in ID and MT. He sent in the following picture from Custer County, ID



K7TM Custer ID

He noted the valley floor is 7000 feet above sea level.

Ron, KB6UF, left ME and headed back to LA.

Ed, K8ZZ, was busy in the north part of MI putting them out. Then into WI.

K8QWY, Ed, ran more in OH....ran through the last 3 in OH for N4CD (tnx) putting them out around the state for various folks.

AB7RW headed down the coast to Clatsop, OR and Pacific/Wahkiakum, WA.

W4FNW/W8FNW headed north through lots of counties in KY and WV on the way home.

Don, AE3Z, headed out for some rarer counties in NY state.

Steve, AA8R, has been busy putting them out on digital modes.

Gene, K5GE, headed on up to WA state.

K0PFV has been active in CO

Jim, N9JF, was busy many days in IL and nearby states.

Kerry, W4SIG, headed to GA and back via the back roads of GA and AL.

KB0BA/N0XYL were on the road again – spotted in WV

W5QP was running around in KS putting them out

AA8R/W8TAX were out many weekends putting them out on digital modes in MI.

K8ZZ returned from his vacation in WI.

K9EN spotted in WI.

AB7RW headed over to Clatsop, OR on a trip.

N2OO was noted in MD and PA.

Jim, N9JF was noted in IN putting them out.

NU4C was spotted in MI putting them out.

Pete, NN9K, was seen all over PA.

Alan, KO7X, was noted on a trip to/in CA.

K5GE, Gene, was busy running around WA and later OR.

K4YFH noted in ND, MN, staying 'cool 'up north.

Kerry, W4SIG, put out a lot in KY getting folks done.

AJ5ZX/KC5QCB ran some counties in TX

NX0X/KB0MMH spotted in NE and IA putting them out

WB0TEV was seen putting out counties in OKLA.

K2HVN put out counties in DE and MD,

W5IL spotted in MD

W5QP did LA – putting out the state

KO7X returned from CA via UT to WY

Gene, NT2A, noted in NYC counties (Queens, Kings, etc)

Jerry, W0GXQ, made a sweep through the northwest counties of MN.

Roger, N3RC was back on the road again putting them out. He's got a new rig.

Food and Oil

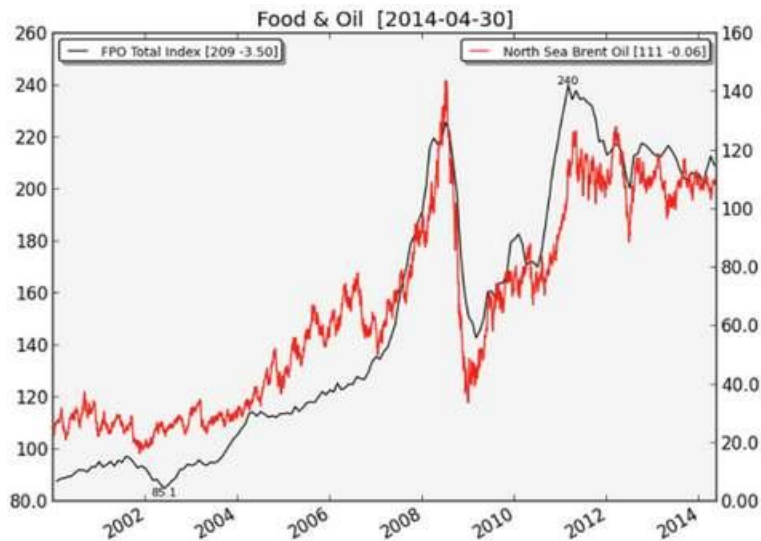
Why Are Food Prices so High? Because We're Eating Oil

Regardless of what we eat, we're actually eating oil.

Anyone who buys their own groceries (as opposed to having a full-time cook handle such mundane chores) knows that the cost of basic foods keeps rising, despite the official claims that inflation is essentially near-zero.

Common-sense causes include severe weather and droughts that reduce crop yields, rising demand from the increasingly wealthy global middle class and money printing, which devalues the purchasing power of income.

While these factors undoubtedly influence the cost of food, it turns out that food moves in virtual lockstep with the one master commodity in an industrialized global economy: oil. Courtesy of our friends at Market Daily Briefing, here is a chart of a basket of basic foodstuffs and Brent Crude Oil:



In other words, regardless of what we eat, we're actually eating oil. Not directly, of course, but indirectly, as the global production of tradable foods relies on mechanized farming, fertilizers derived from fossil fuel feedstocks, transport of the harvest to processing plants and from there, to final customers.

Even more indirectly, it took enormous quantities of fossil-fuel energy to construct the aircraft that fly delicacies halfway around the world, the ships that carry cacao beans and grain, the trucks that transport produce and the roads that enable fast, reliable delivery of perishables.

Though many observers see money-printing as the master narrative of the global economy, we don't see much correlation between the Fed's ballooning balance sheet and food/oil. If money-printing alone controlled oil (and thus food), prices of oil/food should have soared as the flood of QE3 (and other central bank orgies of credit-money creation) washed into the global economy from late 2012.

Instead, oil/food have traced out a wedge: prices have remained in a relatively narrow trading range during the orgy of money-printing.

While money creation is one influence on commodity prices, supply and demand matter, too; in that sense, money printing only matters if it pushes demand higher while constricting supply.

In effect, the influences of monetary inflation and supply/demand show up in food via the price of oil. Until we stop eating oil (10 calories of fossil fuels are consumed to put

one calorie of food on the table), oil is the master commodity in the cost of food.

Source: peak oil news at peakoil.com

On the Road with N4CD P3

Wow.....every now and then as I get older I get bouts of insomnia.....all started a couple years ago when I doc I consulted recommended I try the new 'wonder drug' Coreg. Wow....the 'desired' effect was great. Blood Pressure of 100/60.....resting heart rate of 62. It had great 'desired' benefits. The undesired result was after a week, I went into total insomnia for nearly 3 months.....no sleep. Zip. Tried every sleep pill there is to try to get over it.....Lunesta, Ambien, and stuff you've never heard of. Each worked for a few days to give me a couple hours sleep, then after a week, didn't work any more. Every now and then, I get bouts of insomnia for weeks or a month at a time. No natural sleep.

This time it hit two weeks before I was headed to AK. Don't know what triggered it but suddenly I wasn't getting any sleep, just awake all night. This wasn't the time to be heading out on a 3 week trip. Try going for days and days with next to no sleep and see what happens. Well...this wasn't the time to be sick. If I could cancel everything, I would have.....but....half the money was non-refundable....and the problem didn't get any better by departure date. I was getting half zonked – not getting enough sleep. Not getting any for the most part.

I made a check list....checked it twice...checked it 3 times. Plans were for 20/17/15 operation with both cw and SSB. My itinerary was for 3 weeks, with ANC as the home base and trips from there to the other two by air. Power cable – long- with big clip leads. Plus spare clamps from PEP Boys in two sizes – radiator hose clamps. The IC-706 was in a separate bag along with mic and paddles, but it went into the carry on bag. You've got to protect they display otherwise you are out of luck. And radio.

So it was off to Alaska running at less than 50% capacity and speed. Maybe the change of scenery would get me back to sleeping at night. Too late to stop the plan now.

Come June 15 and I dragged myself over to DFW airport with the 'small bag' carry on with the radio (IC706 original) weighing 24.8 lbs....and the big bag with the mag mount,

the tools (screw driver – 2, pair pliers, adjustable 'monkey wrench', scissors, wire cutters), the power cable, the MFJ antenna analyzer, radio speaker, mast sections, resonators plus spare 20M resonators, spare multi-way adapter and couple more coupling screws, - oh....and clothes.....enough for 3 weeks with one wash in the middle. That bag weighed in at 45 lbs. Heavy but I would check it. I rode the Super Shuttle - less cost that parking a car at the airport...and you get delivered right to the check in counter so you avoid the 'long term parking' hassles, shuttle bus, etc. DFW is a big airport with hundreds of flights a day. Parking for probably 10,000 cars. Checked the big bag and carried the smaller on on to the plane.

The adventure started with a six hour flight to Anchorage on a Boeing 757.. I was off...running at well under 50% energy wise....well, feeling not much better than 'I'd rather stay in bed all day'. But it was time to go.....and did.

This AA flight gets you into Anchorage at 7 pm or so. That's Alaska time. It's 3 hours 'earlier' than Central Time.....along the way, it is daylight. You see mountains for thousands of miles. As you get to AK, it's nothing but 'white' down below. Mountains, glaciers, ice.....nice to look at but COLD looking. Let's see..we are at 33,000 feet cruising along, likely 60 below outside. Down below it is probably below freezing since all the snow is still there. Brrr....Uneventful flight. Packed, not a spare seat. By the time you count getting to the airport, waiting time, flying time, getting your luggage.....it's likely close to 12 hours elapsed time. You need to be at the airport 2 hours ahead of time for the major ones, and you have to do the remove shoes, empty pockets routine. At DFW, I got the full treatment. They had to open the bag and send the radio through separately. Got the full body scanner, holding up arms while they took terrahertz video. What a pain. The big bag got opened because of the mag mounts. They just see 3 big blobs and they open the bag to find out what it is, and leave you a note saying the bag was opened for TSA inspection. Happened every time!

Next it was time to get to the rental car area at Dollar Rent a Car.. Hmmmm.. it's a good hike there with the heavy bags (roller bags). I get there and for a 'compact car' they want to give me a Toyota Yaris....that's a midget car in my book.....smallest thing Toyota sells, in the US. There's one down the street from me and when I see it, it just looks so tiny. I don't think I can even fit in and drive the thing. What to do? Well, for more money (bring lots if you head to AK), they'll rent you a larger car....like a Subaru Outback. That sounded good. I'd be keeping it for 12 days or so as it was cheaper to keep it while I went to Nome (getting the week rate for part of the rental). I sure hoped it would be a good radio car. It was.

It was way to late to even think about radio.....no propagation to the US at that time on

20m, plus half the country was headed to bed already at that time. I headed to the Super 8 motel in Anchorage about five easy miles from the airport. Bring money. Everything is expensive here. As I pull into the parking lot, I spy a SUV with FL plates – KD4RV. Hmm....a ham is staying here. 20M antenna on the car.

I check in and try to find out who the car belongs to.....guy at desk doesn't know. I headed up to the room, pull out my little Samsung tab which I use for spotting when on the road, or to check the K3IMC forum at night.....and used QRZ.com to find out who KD4RV was. Got his name, and called the front desk and asked to be connected to Bob, KD4RV..gave the last name. Bob answers and we arrange to have a quick eyeball down by his car. The trip was off to a good start, ham wise.

A few minutes later, we met down by his car and he showed me his 'no holes installation' of a IC7000. The antenna was a Hustler 52 inch mast mounted off a bracket at the bottom of the SUV....with the antenna running parallel to the body for most of the way 5 or 6 inches out, and with the resonator at the top edge of the car....not the way to do it if you've ever attended a W9UCW antenna presentation We fired up the rig, but there was zilch coming in at 8pm at night. 0400z.

He mentioned that he drives up here every summer.....spends weeks up in AK....and he hadn't heard much of anything while he drove up here. He also mentioned the road from ANC to Fairbanks was good to Denali Park,then it was the 'worst road' he had to travel to get up here – for the next 70 miles....with lots of gravel and construction and delays. That wasn't encouraging. I was headed that way tomorrow....

When you get to Alaska in June, you ARE in the Land of the Midnight Sun.....it might 'dip' at 2am, stay down for 2-3 hours, then it's back to steady sunshine. It really never gets dark and you can take a book outside at 10pm and read it with no problem. The motel rooms have heavy dark curtains but the light comes in all around it. It never really gets dark in the rooms. The further north you go, the more hours of sunlight you get. You just get twilight at best during the 'dark hours'. It doesn't help those with sleep problems – hi hi.

Well, it had been a long day and I tried to get some sleep. Temps in the 60s but the room was warm.

Breakfast at the motel. No waffle maker. They have hard boiled eggs. Ate two and had cereal.

Come Monday it was time to head to Fairbanks for the 4th district. That's about 280

miles north of Anchorage. I leave early. You pass through Wasilla (pop 10,000, home of Sarah Palin) and keep driving. Good roads. I stopped out in the boonies, and set up the mobile 'big antenna' on the Subaru Outback. Now was the moment of truth....did everything get packed and arrive safely? Set up and ran 14 cw and SSB and went to 17m. 15M didn't want to tune despite twiddling. Same problem on my set up at home. Never could get it to work right. I had to adjust the resonators.....not quite right and you need full power up here. Tuned it after cw to get to SSB freq near .339 which I used the first few times. Then to 17 but not much action there. Had to tweak it too.

Run from the 3rd was decent.....got all the Mobile Diamond seekers.(N9STL, KC3X, N8KIE, K5GE, N4AAT, N5UZW, N9QS, N2OCW, etc)....other than Dan, KM9X, who was in the hospital with major problems. Hopefully he'll be back in action here soon chasing the counties. All but Joe, N5UZW could be worked on cw....but I had to get to SSB to give it out for some. Ran both, then disassembled things and stored them away. It would be a couple hours till the next. I made an error here.....



N4CD/m Third AK
Subaru Outback

The Outback was easy to get to the battery, and the mag mount worked fine on the roof.

It had zero noise. (the Subaru Legacy on Dukes was horrible noise when running). No explanation.....other than maybe options?

You head north on the Parks highway – that gets you to Denali National Park (Mt McKinley). The weather was good but there was cloud cover up north. Didn't get to see the mountains. The road was great up to there. Stopped at the Subway in Denali Village for lunch. Busy place. Temp in low 60s.....

I'd been warned to watch for elk and moose. Saw a moose tail end at mile 178. Just gone off the road into the woods when I spied him.

Then it was heading further north. True enough.....you had 40 miles of gravel road at 20-30 mph....and two big 'pilot car' waits for a 15 mile each way one lane road.....It took a while to get to the Fourth District. Kent, KV7N, said it was 212 miles north of ANC. I went further before running since I was headed to Fairbanks anyway.....280 miles...

I found a place to stop and sit for an hour....with the hood up, the big antenna on top.....and put out the Fourth.....and that was 2 out of 4 counties now done. However, the 17m antenna didn't work....I checked out the resonator – and it was missing the 'stinger'. I searched the ground around.....spent 10 minutes looking for it. Checked the back of the car. Nope. Looks like after I adjusted it in the 3rd, I didn't tighten it down enough and the stinger fell out as I disassembled the antenna, and it is somewhere back in the 3rd. I'm not sure I could find that spot again either. Oh well. The good news sort of is now 15m is down to 1:1 SWR and putting out full power. The bad news was that 15m wasn't open for the other districts worth a darn, if at all. . My error – lost 17m and no easy way to fix and no energy to run around getting it fixed. 20M would have to do from now on out unless was operating from a fixed station.

Half way done the first full day in AK....piece of cake...but the next two would be a lot more effort to do. You cannot drive to Nome, and the only other choice is the 'haul road' for 800 miles round trip, an airplane ride/car rental, or teleportation.

That night was at the Super 8 in Fairbanks. Nice. But bring money. Things are sky high here. No \$50/night motels in AK. Think \$150/night and UP. Every parking spot has an a/c outlet on a post for use in the winter time to keep your engine warm. You also see these in North Dakota and northern MN as well at the motels.

Meals are 25-50% more. Gas is near \$4 gallon in Fairbanks and Anchorage. Food? Fruit is 50-100% more. Most basics in the stores here are 20-50% more (boxes and

canned stuff). Veggies – 50% more. Bought some fruit at the local store.

I hooked up with Larry, N1TX the next day. We'd connected via email before the trip and he invited me to stop on by. We had a breakfast meet at a local cafe.....then headed out to his QTH about 20 miles outside of town. He has a 'contest station' – 2 positions – that he bought like 10-20 years ago from another ham, KL7RA, who owned it. Sold it. Moved down in the Third – he's still active and you're likely to work him in SS and other DX contests. He lives out in the boonies in the middle of the forest. KL8DX used this station for many contacts, but he moved recently to NH.



Larry, N1TX – big signal 4th AK

If you need the 4th, you might drop him a line for a sked – SSB, CW, likely data.

The operating positions feature fully automated positions with nice Yaesu top of the line transceivers, ACOM KW amps, switched bandpass filters, etc. There are two antennas. One a Force 12 tribander at 55 feet pointed at the US, no rotor. The other is a tribander at 70 feet pointed at Europe, no rotor. Why no rotors? It regularly gets to 40 below here in winter. Rotors just don't like to work at those temps reliably and coax 'breaks' at those temps if you flex it. The Force 12 antenna has 2 els on 20m. He can work JA's off the back with no problem – hundreds and hundreds and there really isn't much to work in other directions. There's also ice storms here...challenging weather for sure. So he does it to have the least hassles, and the station works well. If you've been around, you've likely worked KL8DX in contests from here.

Larry now works for NOAA – before that worked for Univ of Alaska here - which probably employs half the town one way or another.

Plus, he'll tell you about 'take off angle'. A high gain 4 el beam often won't work better than 2 el. The 'take off angle' shifts all the time up there....and more gain at the horizon is not necessarily good up here. Less metal up in the sky means less metal to fall in bad ice storm too!

We fired up the radio on the CH CW freq and went to town. The bands weren't great. Even with big antennas, most sigs weren't much out of the noise – S3 to S5 with lots of QSB going up and down 20-30 dB. We put another 50 contacts in the log from the Fourth.....hopefully catching everyone who needed N4CD/KL7 (fixed). I ran the bands dry. Went to 17m (beam works but not much gain there) and 15m for a few more. After a couple hour visit, back to the motel to rest up. Still running at well under 50% speed. Half zonked. There was a Denny's next to the Super 8. I ate a lot of meals there. It's the northern most Denny's in the US. If you are an AARP member, you get 20% off the total bill. That helps on the prices. Denny's has salads too.

Larry was going to be putting out W1AW/KL7 from his station (he is N1TX, the 'club call' they use in contests is KL2R). That was going to happen while I was there but I wasn't up to a couple hours of putting it out....I declined the invitation....just trying to get over the sleep problem. Rained all day Wednesday. Yuk. Was still a steady rain on Thursday. Chilly, too in the 50s. Friday would be a repeat, but I'd get out of the rain after the first 100 miles.

Come Thursday and it was time to head back to Anchorage and one night at the Super 8 before heading to Nome on Friday. Got back after 7-8 hour trip. Scoped out the airport to figure out the best way to not have to lug the suitcases around. Tomorrow it would be off to Nome (Second AK).

Continued in Part IV

Alabama QSO Party

The mobiles were out and running. W4ZGB, K5YAA, KC4HW, KN4Y, W4AN and others kept folks busy on cw. Maybe 1 or 2 mobiles out on SSB. The DX was in. 15M was pretty quiet here but CA and DX had a good time there. Not much spot wise on 15m other than by DX. When only one or two mobiles were in new counties, the pile ups got pretty intense. Half a dozen fixed stations gave out even more counties on cw. This is a 12 hour contest with half of it in the 'evening hours' for use of the lower bands (80M).

I needed six counties to start...and still needed five at the end. Seems the mobiles either faded out on 20M before they got there in the evening (and too early for 40M), or drove around the ones I needed – which is likely why I needed them in the first place – not easy to get to. Missed two that way. They'll still be there. I saw KC4HW/m spotted in Covington on 40M but never heard a peep on 20M – one of the needed ones. Then he simply disappeared for the rest of the contest.

We had county hunters showing up – Ed, KN4Y, came in from FL. K5YAA and the 'land rush' big mobile came in from OK. W4AN(K4BAI) from GA and K4ZGB, one of the AL folks, are active in several QSO parties. Didn't see too many spots on SSB but those spotters could have been 'missing'. Bob, W0BH worked a bunch on SSB. Some were on SSB but very few spots.

K4ZGB mobile made 443 cw QSOs. Had no comments on trip.

Some big time thunderstorms, potential tornadoes with alerts issued, was present in the north half of AL. Weather impacted some operations and with the storms churning up static, not much happened on 80m at all. Many stations had gone QRT because of storms.

Near the start of the contest, I worked one station on 15 and that was it. It's usually 'too close' for 15. After that unusual 'short skip' one on 15, that was it. Dead silence the rest of the contest, even though I knew the mobiles were there. No 40M propagation till the evening and then mostly fixed stations from here.

(Later in the month, Kerry, W4SIG, headed through AL- gave me a call on the phone twice and I whacked off another couple as he hit them. Serendipity. AL is close to being done. Thanks to county hunter friends)

From the 3830 contest reflector:

KN4Y – mobile

I started to Alabama for the QSO party and started calling on the CH frequency on the way. I heard nothing and thought no not the band conditions. Then Jerry, W0GXQ, called me on the cell phone and said stations were coming back to me. I checked and checked and lo and behold my RIT knob was full CCW. I reset the knobs and started working stations, Jerry saved the day. Thanks.

In the AQP I has 253 QSO's on 40-meters, 413 on 20-meters and 27 on 15-meters (The band was open but no one knew it}.

Good band condition, great weather, and good food. Driver missed a turn and the road ended in the Talladega National Forrest, a nice ranger got us back in the right direction. Plus side ran unscheduled Cleburne county.

W4AN/mobile (K4BAI opr, N4DTV mobile) – 18 counties covered

A first contest run for N4DTV's communications van, which Bryan, N4DTV and Ted, W4DUF have been outfitting. A nice operating chair and desk with built in monitors. Van has a gasoline generator so a.c. and d.c. power are available. That gave me the luxury of using my FT1000MP in a mobile QSO party operation for the first time. Thanks to KU8E for setting up N1MM for me and for helping by telephone when I had trouble with the program. Also many thanks to Davey, AD4NR, who drove all the way. Bryan was chief engineer and navigator and would have made SSB QSOs if that had been possible. As it turned out, I had only 40 and 20M antenna available and worked only CW.

We got a late start due to difficulties setting up the rigs and antennas in the van. We had a 14 county route planned and got to all those counties plus four others. Hope we gave a lot of hunters new counties. QSLs go via K4BAI. We lost another hour due to a problem with N1MM when we shut it down at a gasoline stop. 20 and 40M CW were generally

good. Unfortunately, just before the gas stop, we had a bumpy road (Do you know I-20 around Talladega?) and the key line from my keyer to the rig failed and I didn't have a spare.

So, for the last part of the contest, I had only the computer to send preset F key messages and I couldn't send anything else. I don't know how to change the N1MM logging program into a CW keyboard (like I would do with NA and CT by using Alt K--when I used Alt K in N1MM, some window came up and I had to make it go away before I could log anything else).

Anyway, I apologize to those of you that I was unable to greet personally as I would have done if the keyer line had been working. Lot of activity from most of US and Canada, plus a number of Europeans such as OM2VL, DL3DXX, DL3GA, DK3BN, DL5MU, SM6VR, I1EIS, UA9FAR from Asia, and FG8NY and YV5OIE being more local DX. Thanks to the organizers and hope everyone had as much fun as we did. Hope to repeat in future years. 73, John, K4BAI.

I think we missed HI, AK, UT, NV, WY, LA, ME, and SD.

Rig:FT1000MP, 100W, Hustler 40M whip, 20M hamstick.

K5YAA mobile

A 1,150 mile round trip to and from Alabama, the drive was uneventful back and forth to Oklahoma. I left a day early and ran a number of Mississippi counties on CH frequencies during the day Friday and then stayed overnight in Columbus, MS planning for a short drive to start the AQP in Pickens county Alabama on Saturday. Just before going to Pickens I drove into Lamar County AL and made a few QSOs on the CH frequencies.

On my way back to Columbus to find Hwy 82 I was (again) stopped by a friendly fellow who wanted to see my license. Like the Missouri Lady he just gave me a warning and said "Have a nice day". Mississippi officials also know a good thing when they see it! After all my episodes this year I actually am trying to watch my hurrying - a 45 MPH sign showed up and I was doing 55 so began to slow but too late - the blue lights started flashing. Oh well, only a warning so the day started off OK after all.

At 11AM Central the party began. This may be the first QSO Party I have been in that I had NO navigation problems. Even feeling like a one armed paper hanger all day I made not one wrong turn. Pretty amazing if you could have seen everything that was going on. Band changes, tuning the Tarheel, turning on the recorder, using the bug now and then and keeping the van between the ditches all the while watching for county signs. Made for a swift 12 hours on the roads of Alabama. I had planned my run using Streets and Trips which does a pretty fair job of estimating arrival times into new counties. I believe I was on schedule all day and even gained a few minutes after making it to the Northern counties. Going through Jefferson county N4JF asked QTH? I said JEFF - he said no QTH? Oh - I sent "Hwy 65 headed North". Jerry said he was only a mile a way maybe a visit. Suspecting my time would be tight I sent "sri time short". He said - "I understand have fun". Maybe another time Jerry - I had the game on!

Wind the clock forward now to late afternoon and Colbert County up in the Northwest. I had just stopped and fetched me a Subway sandwich and was enjoying when I heard what sounded like a siren. Turns out it was the Tornado warning siren near Tuscumbia. A voice came on saying "Take cover immediately". Cover where? I thought. Black skies filled the territory North of Tuscumbia and I was heading to the South so forward I went. Me and dozens of other cars on Hwy 43. Headlights were on. I pulled over to work Colbert county but first put my cover on the generator. Minutes later the rains - very heavy - began. Good timing on the generator cover placement. Finishing Colbert I went on toward Franklin county. Still raining pretty hard I pulled over into a KFC parking lot that was just about empty.

In Franklin now, I started my run. The rain and winds picked up. Buckets of water and probably 50 MPH winds. In addition to being a ham operator W0BH part times as a weather man I guess because he began to send me reports. His radar showed a tornado 5 miles Southwest of Russellville. Hmmm - that's just about where I am sitting or at least I could be in the path of the thing. Well, I told Bob "I'll just hunker down and hope for the best." A bit later the weather man gave me an all clear - the tornado has lifted. Whew, missed me. Must have been all that CW that chased it off. After my Franklin adventure I moved along toward Winston County. The rains had subsided a bit but the road was still crowded with cars heading South. In Winston I pulled into a church parking lot and began my run. Here came the heavy rains again. They finally let up just about the time I started moving toward Walker county, my last for the party. The roads in

Winston and Walker counties were cluttered with leaves and small tree limbs. Some of the clutter looked like small animals that late at night so I moved along at a slower rate (something new for me). I found me a spot in Walker county to finish up the party. I had 30 minutes left after making it to Walker - I was pleased as my trip plan said I would only have about ten minutes at the end. Finished the party on 80 CW which still had some pretty good QRN caused by the storm that had moved on to the east.

Having the K3 memories setup with CW and SSB frequencies made for swift changes between modes. The Tarheel doesn't need a re-tune going to SSB from CW so even without my Hustlers I was able to scoot to SSB quickly - that is after I found my mic. I studied a picture of my K3 microphone at home so I would know what it looked like.

Thanks to everyone who made my log. I do these parties for the "Fun of It". An Oklahoma DX Association saying that fits nicely.

In addition, I would like to thank Jim KC4HW and crew for a good party. Work to put one of these on is always appreciated. The mobile route listings, rule modifications and working to cover the entire state takes time to do so thanks again.

Finally, thanks Bob, W0BH for your concern for my well being during those nasty storms. It was gratifying to know someone would know where to find me if I ended up in a twisted pile of mobile trappings on the side of an Alabama road!

That's my story for the 2014 Alabama QSO Party. This one is my 6th for this year. The next one will be the Kansas Party on August 23 and 24. I am pleased to say Colin, KU5B has accepted my offer to come be with me in that one. We will be running as W0L this year. Bob, W0BH and staff! put on a pretty good show so I am looking forward to the run in the great state of Kansas.

Best 73, Jerry K5YAA

W0BH – fixed – KS 160 cw 68 ssb qso

Conditions were really excellent from Kansas to Alabama this year, but it seemed like activity was way down from last year. I only found half the mobile stations listed on the web site, but the mobiles who did get out there really worked hard.

Overall I missed 12 counties (combined) compared to 2 in 2013:

BUTL CHOC CLRK COFF CONE CREN FAYE JKSN LAMA LOWN MNRO WASH

My overall Q count was down by 27, and that would have been much much worse without super-mobile Jerry/K5YAA pouring out the counties and the kilowatts for a total of 82 contacts or 36% of my total contacts. It's even more amazing since Jerry was a solo op and only put out 14 counties. That means we averaged 5.8 contacts per county which means 3 bands per county. It doesn't get any better than that! He really perfected the fast SSB-switch this time with his "new" antennas and it paid off for both of us.

Later in the afternoon from Franklin county, Jerry mentioned that he was in quite a storm. I pulled up the radar to see what was happening and saw lots of severe thunderstorm warnings in the northwestern part of Alabama. The worst activity seemed to be in Franklin county. While I watched, they put up a tornado warning "box" covering the center of Franklin county. I pulled up the text of the warning and it said a radar-indicated tornado was 9 miles southwest of Russellville moving east.

I immediately found Jerry on CW, switched him to SSB, and asked exactly where he was. He'd gone through Russellville "a little while ago" heading southeast, so he "hunkered down" but of course kept operating! I kept one ear on Jerry, and had Lorna keep an eye on the radar until the red warning box went away. Jerry was glad to hear that and so was I. Lots of bad weather there yet, but he made it out. We were even able to make an 80m CW contact from Franklin county in the midst of the storm. Unbelievable.

Here's my log's activity count for the mobiles :

82 K5YAA/m

27 KN4Y/m

21 W4AN/m

13 K4ZGB/m

03 KC4HW/m (and another 3 from your home, I think). Mobile problems ??

01 N3FU/m, but it was a new mult in his only county!

Twice I called John/K4BAI in W4AN/m after hearing him give out a county and got a new county instead as he crossed the line. In both cases, I luckily just missed the contact and not the mult!

Thanks to the ACG and the operators who made this another fun event! Special thanks to Jim/KC4HW for his hard work as well. Until the next one ...

73, Bob, w0bh

WA1FCN/4 – Walker AL Fixed – 342 CW

Well that was fun till about 7:00 pm local. 160 and 80 were useless. 9:10 pm local I disconnected antennas and called it 73 over. Severe thunderstorms forced an end to contest.

N4KG Limestone, AL Fixed 218 cw 246 sssb

My plan was to operate as long as there was a reasonable rate.

The first session lasted 3.5 hours with a couple of short breaks (lunch etc.)

After a nap, I put in another 2 hrs and 25 minutes from 2125 to 2350 when I was informed that a Tornado had just entered North Alabama from Mississippi. QRT !

As often happens, the storm diminished as it moved east, the tornado warning was canceled but SEVERE Thunderstorm continued until around 0300Z when I heard a Loud BOOM that sounded like a Civil War Cannon being fired from my front yard.

By 0320Z things seemed pretty quiet so I fired up on 40M for another 40 CW Q's mixed in with 11 Q's on 80M. There just weren't many callers, especially on 80, even for 'fresh meat' and a 'mult'.

Tom N4KG in Limestone County

N6MU – fixed – CA 115 cw 36 cw - - 44 cw and 26 ssb mults

Not the best conditions on 20 but 15 was wide open all day with loud AL signals. Even 40 was tough the last hour or so. I only heard four mobiles consistently but they kept the action going the whole time. Top mobile for me was K5YAA with 44 Qs followed by KN4Y(25), W4AN(15) and K4ZGB(7). Thanks to all the AL participants for hanging in there. 73...

John, N6MU

WN4AFP – fixed – SC

Enjoyed my FIRST AQP! 40m was tough until Saturday evening. I worked a couple of stations on 20m when the AQP started, but the band was too long for me. As always, thanks to all the mobiles that could hear me - W4AN, K5YAA, N4QP, WB4KBS, KN4Y, KC4HW and K4ZGB. The fixed stations were also very active and booming into South Carolina during the "night" hours. The CW segment was very busy with W1AW/4 Alabama and PVRC.

73's Dave
WN4AFP

N8II – fixed WV

Well, things were not quite in my favor or most of the the other ops. 15 could not have been much worse and storms in the AL area pounded the low bands accounting for 3 Q's each on 15 and 80 CW. I listened on both bands quite a few times with the slow pace giving me plenty of time after the first hour to check marginal bands and work some museum ship stations on the side. 20 went long around 21Z until 2330Z when it reopened on Es until past 02Z, but few stations were around for the revival. This made for some pretty slow hours; the fixed stations were either QRT or worked already by and large.

Many thanks to the mobiles who made it worthwhile to troll the bands. Jim, KC4HW, Tom, K4ZGB, and Ed, KN4Y are perennial stalwarts in the AQP. Throw in John, K4BAI operating W4AN, and continuous roamer Jerry, K5YAA and you have a pretty good mobile turnout. They were all on the majority of the AQP with Ed, John, and Jerry still operating when I quit just before 03Z. I retired last year and assume that most all of the ops are retired and enjoying ham radio

mobile contesting. Jerry, K5YAA from OK has driven far and wide (FL to WY/MT in 1 week!) hitting many of the QSO parties in the last year. John and ED(?) are in their 70's and still going contest strong. Many thanks for your efforts and hope the storms didn't cause too much trouble!

Thanks to all for the Q's and hope Es will be better with fewer storms next year.

73, Jeff N8II

NT2A – fixed NY 134 CW QSO

It was great party and mobile activity. The conditions were not so good this year from my NY location. Most worked on 20m. Only got 2 QSO on 15m with real report 229.

On 80m heard about 15 AL stations, but worked 4. My thanks to all mobiles, fixed operators and special to K4ZGB, Tom who gave me last AL county Wilcox for 3rd time USA CA.

Best 73,
NT2A, Gene

On the Road with N4CD P4

I left Fairbanks early in the morning on Thursday in the steady rain for the 7 hour or so driving trip back to Anchorage. Rained 1/3rd the way. No, you can't see Russia from Wasilla....but it's a lot closer in Nome! There was a bit of luck not having to stop for more than 2 or 3 minutes at the 'one way' sections, hitting it just right. Otherwise you could sit for half an hour for each. I was headed back to the Super 8 motel in ANC for the night, then flying to Nome on Friday.

Thursday evening I scoped out the airport short term parking – seeing how close I could get so I didn't have to haul the bags around. The wheels on the big one looked like they were beginning to disintegrate. Would they make it home? That suitcase was probably 20 years old and so where the 'rubber' type material on the wheels. 45 lbs is a lot of

stuff for a small set of wheels.

It looked like a decent plan with not too much hauling required. I could park within a few hundred feet, wheel the bags in, check in and just have the one to 'carry one'. That small bag has likely gone the better part of a million miles, half of it county hunting miles, in the last 35 years. The zipper on it was starting to go at the end. I'll be shopping for new suitcases back in TX.

There are two flights to Nome – both around noon. One goes direct and one makes another stop at Kotzebue, and even smaller outpost. They are both around noon – 1 pm. That's it other than smaller puddle jumper planes.

About 30 minutes before time to board, I realize I left my ski jacket in the car! I was headed for 'cold territory' where you need something like that usually. Dang! Well, I wound up buying a heavy sweatshirt at one of the tourist places to have. I didn't want to freeze my butt off in Nome. Normal temps in June are low 50s for highs and near 40 for a lows. The forecast had a few warmer days in there. Well, more money spent on the trip. My mistake. It was dark in the parking garage with minimal light, and I missed the jacket on the front seat. I was too busy getting the bags out the back of the Outback.

Alaska Air flies a 737 to Nome...but half the seats are gone. Aisle 1 to 15 are missing. There's a big bulkhead and that space is all cargo space! Just about everything folks need there is flown in. Other than gas/ diesel and other things like it – brought in by barge – everything else goes by air. Groceries, clothing, hardware, you name it. There is no road and no good harbor for ships to anchor. No cruise ships come by. Nome is 2000 people roughly although a bunch of them fly south for the winters.

The flight is full. It's an hour and a half flight. You need to go down stairs at the airport, walk 300 feet out to the plane, then up steps. There is no 'jet way' for this service. I get my exercise with the 25 lb carry on. Fortunately, somehow I get a 'TSA precheck' so no hassles with taking off shoes, etc. Just empty pockets, go through metal detector. It would be that way the rest of the way on flights. Arrived in Nome about an hour and half after the plane takes off. Then again, if you count all the time from when you leave the motel, park, get there 2 hours early, etc, it's another eight hours you lost that day. Arrive in Nome and take cab to the Aurora Inn – which is also where Stampede Rental Cars are located. Got to get the rental car and get the county put out.

Nome is a pretty small place, but EXPENSIVE for tourists. Bring \$\$\$\$, lots of them. I had reserved a car and they told me it would be a Toyota RAV or equivalent. I checked into the Inn – a very nice place – think Hilton Inn type room.....two double beds – could

sleep four – but that's all they have. Mini Fridge and 2 sets of plates, forks, etc so you could eat some meals in room if that was your thing and save some money. I immediately wanted to see what they would give me for a rental.

Now – word of warning. Aurora Inn has 58 rooms. Later I learned that Stampede rental has 60 vehicles. 95% of them are Fords – nice shiny white Ford 8 passenger type vans and nice shiny white Ford Explorers. They were all over the parking lot. Only saw one other car in the lot and it was a Toyota SUV of some type. 4 wheel drive. We all know what noise generators Fords are! You need to reserve a car ahead of time. A long time ahead. There are no 'last minute' ones available and this is the ONLY rental place in town.

This is 'bird watching' season in Nome. Bird watchers from around the globe descend upon Nome. There are organized tours to see them. That's why the proliferation of large capacity vans for rentals. You're competing against the birders for motel space and car reservations. There is one other hotel in town a mile down the main road.

As it turned out, the County Hunting Luck held. I got a giant Toyota Tundra Truck – 4x4 with extended cab – seating for six if you wanted. Roof is 7-8 feet above ground. If I can get to the battery, it should work fine. Have the guy show me how to open the hood and there is the battery – easy to connect to! Yippee. Looks good. Other than eating some gas, it looked like a good vehicle to use. Fortunately you can park on the street and there is lots of room for this monster truck. It's giant. You step UP into the cab. It takes muscle to move the shift lever. You can't reach the roof from the ground. You either stand in the side doorway (holding on to a convenient point, or you get in the bed of the pickup truck to put your mag mount up on top.

I pile in the suitcases before I even get to the room and head 'east' out of Nome. You need to get away from the power line noise in the 'city'.. About 10 miles out of town, by the KICY antennas, you can turn off on a construction road along Norton Sound, be far away from the lines, be 50 feet from the sea, and have a great shot back at the lower 48.

I set things up carefully. Triple check the battery connections. 3 times. Assemble the 7 foot antenna with the 3 resonators that now only work on 20 and 15m. It's late in the afternoon US time. There are two good periods for propagation most days. It's 'sunrise' AK time, ie, about 0630 AK time, or 1430 Z. Of course, the sun comes up here at 4:30am sort of ...it really never gets dark here. Just dim. The other time is sunset on the east coast....say 6:30pm EDST or 2-2:30 local AK time, or 2200-2300z. 15M might be best in between with sun over the middle of the path. I'd hustle to catch the band before it died.



N4CD/m Second District – Toyota Pickup 4x4
Ant on top of roof – Norton sound behind

Temps were in the high 60s for the first 3 days in Nome – nice – almost too nice as the room stayed warm all night long – the place was super insulated but the sun was hot and kept it warm inside. There is no a/c other than in the cars in Nome. The mosquitoes found me in 3 minutes and started biting away. With the fan on high and the a/c on (it was 'hot' in the sun')– it helped but I still got bug bit there – all runs.

Nome is a strange place. At 8pm at night, the sun side of you is 'warm' . The shady side of you is cold. You can be hot and cold at the same time here. The sun puts out lots of heat when it is out. There's 21 1/2 hours of 'sun' here and 2 1/2 hours of 'dim'. It never gets real dark in June, especially around the Solstice, the longest daylight hours of the year.

WQ7A was good copy and K5GE right behind him. That nailed my MP contact for the second. It was a good run that went on and on – 20cw first, then 20 SSB nearly 14257.

The radio liked the SWR up to about 14300....but power dropped off above that. So I ran down around 257.....worked out fine. I did not want to be adjusting the resonator between runs....already lost one 'stinger' and that still bothered me. 17M might have worked. 15 was not open to speak of.

Only logged a few on 15 the whole trip from the mobile. Not much better from fixed stations. There were a pile that went in the log, with many too-too relays needed. I had zero noise and the radio...you could hear S1 signals easily. Right at the noise. The problem came with 3 or 4 of them calling – you just couldn't make one out. Relays helped and K1TKL and others on CW did a great job, and Terry, Mary, AB7NK, Joe, N5UZW, Joyce, N9STL, and others helped on SSB. I barely had phone service here. There is no 'data service' other than text now in Nome and it doesn't extend this far out. That's a long story.

Barry needed the Second as the last for WBOW to finish up Master Platinum. We connected as he is done now! That was great.

So you think your gas prices are high?



Gas in Nome AK – June 2014

My last trip to Nome was in 2002. Gas was near \$5 gal then. Now it is over \$6/gallon.

There are 3 roads out of Nome. Two go 50 miles and stop. One goes 100 miles and stops. That's it. Unless you are going 'off road' there isn't too far to drive here. You can't drive to anywhere else. Once you are 3 miles from the city limit, there isn't much. They don't plow past the city limits once the snow starts. Period. Everyone seems to own a ATV – even ride them to the grocery store in town. Plus of course, folks have snow machines for winter use. They get a lot of use up here.

The next morning I repeated the same thing – for the 'early session' at 'sunrise'. No breakfast at the Inn.....so you are on your own. There's the Hudson's trading store – a Safeway type store where you can stock up on food and other stuff. I bought some fruit. There is a Subway here – good for lunch but 30% higher prices than the lower 48. There are a half dozen restaurants, but plan on \$18 breakfast, \$28 to \$40 dinners, and \$15 hamburger platters (with fries). There are 4 pizza places – some have other items. That's it. Oh....despite being 'on the Sound' with water all around....you won't find much in the way of sea food here – if they even have it the day you want to eat it! They always have chicken fried steak and hamburgers.

As with all the districts, I had made contact with hams that had fixed stations. Next day I met up with Ramon, AL7X. We met for chow at the Polar Cub Cafe on Front Street. Just about everything in town is on Front Street or one perpendicular to it at the end, the only two paved streets in town other than the airport road. Everything else is gravel – for ease of plowing in the winter and the problem of 'heave' of the permafrost just below the surface.

The last time I went to AK, I arranged to meet two of the local hams. Ramon was one – he was working downtown as an internet provider. The other was Tom, NL7H, who ran the local religious broadcasting station. He's a silent key now. For a while, Greg, son of KL7GN, held that call. I carried a pair of two meter radios to be sure to have 'a contact' in 2002 when I was trying to get to 'transmitted from all counties'. I'd take a 2m contact if the HF bands had died the entire time I was there. Here's the story on Ramon.

He's an interesting character – been up there for decades. He got his degree in 1968, and flew an old plane to Nome then. From his QRZ web page:



Ramon AL7X

“I graduated from Marquette University in 1968 with a degree in Electrical Engineering and moved to Nome, Alaska. I was a private pilot then, and flew my 1939 Taylorcraft all the way. Subsequently involved myself in aviation from 1969 to 1988. I founded Nome Flying Service (now Bering Air), and was partner in Fish River Air Service. Upon my retirement from commercial aviation in 1988, I had accumulated over 14,000 flight hours.

For a while I dabbled in Commercial fishing. I loved the fishing and did OK in Bristol Bay, but did not like the business aspects. In my fishing boat I had a Yaesu FT-707, and operated MM. The radio worked well, but I was too busy fishing to do much operating.

Then I got into the Taxicab business, and somehow also got to deliver UPS packages. The UPS package part grew, but I got disillusioned with taxi passenger service, so now I only do the UPS deliveries. I run two trucks, and have computerized all of the package handling using my Linux expertise.

During 1997-2004 I was Internet Service Provider. My Linux experience came in handy then, and I still personally use Linux almost exclusively. I also use the Android Galaxy S3 and Galaxy Note in my package delivery business.

I have been a ham operator since 1959 (how time flies!). In 1997 I co-founded and had a term as President of SPARC here in Nome, but now I am a co-founder, Director and Secretary of RAM (<http://www.ragchewmagic.com>). I am proud of my record as the CVE for Nome; under the W5YI VEC I have successfully tested over 200 hams here in Nome. I still currently give out ham tests.

My ham station can operate 3.8 MHz through 450 MHz. My HF antennas are a 75/40 trap dipole and a Traffie Hex on a 55 ft tubular tower. The main radio is an Icom IC-7410. “

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The bad news....the antenna had an intermittent and finally died a few days before. It was 'out of commission' and he didn't have the time to get it fixed quickly. He'd arrange an antenna party with some strong bodies to help lower the crank up mast (133 turns on the winch – same going up which is tougher) and see what was wrong. It was 'open' somewhere. There would be no fixed operation from the second. But....if you need the second on any band...wait till the end of summer to 'when he gets around to it'....and give him a buzz. He loves CW, loves data – PSK – and will do SSB...but that is tough, tough tough....

Well, I rested up the next day or two. Running at 30% capacity and not getting any sleep. I ate well....put it all on the credit card so those are going to be gigantic bills. Well, over \$300 to get up here to Nome on the plane, over \$350 a day for the truck and motel....but it had to be done. Now 3/4 done with only one district left to run! Had a few good runs and hopefully worked the pile down to the last one. If you took relays, I hope we got y'all. There may have been one or two in there calling direct....but....it just wasn't to be. Conditions were not great...the sunspots had faded....the MUF was 18 to 20 MHz at Boulder and the A index was 4-5-6-7 while I was there.

If you want, they have reindeer sausage for breakfast but that's about the only exotic food. Otherwise, it's all hauled in by air...and prices are high. Bananas are double. Fruit is double at the store. They have it but you pay. Lettuce – double. Tomatoes – double. Just figure a buck or two on every item just for the shipping.

The place hadn't changed much. The locals said 'well, we got a new hospital'. That's the big deal in the past 12 years since I was there, and it was the last place I would want to visit on my trip. Hi hi. I chilled out for another day. I had left an extra day just to be sure to get at least one decent day of propagation. Up here, you can have radio blackouts that last for days. If you are only going to be in the Second for a day, it's really a crap shoot. Well, last time I stayed at a B&B – the No Place Like Nome B&B. I found it – no longer one but a private house. Found the Alaska Cab company where I rented an old GM truck. They fix the cars but don't rent them any longer. Still looked the same 12 years later and I suspect the main street won't be any different in another 12 years other than some name changes.

There used to be mobile data. Ramon had an iPhone with data service...until AT&T bought out the carrier. Then they stopped offering data and even reduced coverage area to cut costs.....now, the competitor provides text only.

Data to Nome comes via satellite and is EXPENSIVE. You pay for each gigabyte used and it isn't cheap. Most places have wi-fi, but they limit you to texting and limited web browsing and email. No downloading movies....the system will shut you down...and block your adr for the next day in most wi-fi places. Same with internet providers. At \$20/gigabyte, you conserve. It will be a long time before fiber reaches here.

Well, all good things come to an end. It was time to head back to ANC for a few more days before the next excursion to Juneau. Worse, the weather had gone back to normal. On Monday, it never got above 50 there. The clouds moved in and the wind blew. It was downright chilly. The good spell of weather was over. The 'normal' weather continued for the next week as I checked it out of curiosity. My luck had held. Decent weather while I was there.

On Monday, I hopped the 737 back to ANC. The one and only direct flight a day – hi hi. You can't get lost at Nome airport. One gate. Baggage counter 30 feet from where you get off the plane into the building. Still the TSA at the gate. Had a pre-check so didn't have to remove shoes. Just empty pockets of metal and go through the metal detector.

Not long after I was back in Anchorage – got the bag from bag check, headed out to the short term lot – paid an arm and leg, but was out of there before you know it. Least energy and bag carry distance. However, it was macadam type paved garage and tough on those bag wheels. Headed to Motel 6 this time. A bit less, but no breakfast included. Think \$150/night type prices for motel six. Last time I was here I stayed many nights with Gordon, KL7GN and wife. He's apparently in poor health and didn't respond to emails.

I had a few days to kill before the next flight. Ate most dinners at the Golden Corral not far away. Still zonked from lack of sleep. Averaging maybe 2 hours a night sleep at best. I was 'managing' but that was about it.

I tried to do the Second and First on weekends to give folks the best shot. Not everyone is retired in county hunting!

I found a UPS store and arranged to ship 8.5 lbs of clothes back home. I wouldn't be needing them, and it would lessen the load on the failing wheel of the large bag. I also decided to shorten the trip. American Airlines would change my return date (no charge) and that would be on the Monday I get back from Juneau. I could turn in the rental car

in Juneau, , and not need more motels and a rental car the 'third week' which would be eliminated. I had already had 'success' in the 3rd and 4th putting it out. No need to stay there and I wasn't in a sightseeing mood. I'd seen nearly everything the first trip when I spent a month in AK. Once you've done the tourist thing in Fairbanks and Nome and Juneau...there is no reason to do it again! Same for Anchorage.

While I was in Anchorage, I got together with Bruce, KL7D. We had a meet up at the Village Inn south of the motel 16 and just east of his QTH. Anchorage is surrounded by mountains...the further 'west' you get, the further back you are. Bruce had a good QTH back from the mountains. After a nice breakfast (thanks Bruce) we headed over to this QTH to put out the THIRD from a fixed location. So far was 2 for 3 on getting on from a fixed location.



Bruce KL7D

Here's Bruce in front of the house with the big quad antenna. To the left is the motor home with antenna on the rear. Bruce was planning on getting down to Visalia this year, but he's a caretaker now on weekends, and has family coming in from overseas in early July that ended those plans. Maybe next year!

We fired up the station and had success on cw and SSB. The bands were not great but added a few more into the logs. Tried 15 with not a whole lot of success. The sunspots just weren't there. After a few hours, I headed back to the motel. Still running at 30-40% of normal with the lack of sleep problem. Well, another day to rest up before the trek to the Fourth.....

and we'll continue that in the next section!

County Sign Database Project

The County Hunters are working at getting a picture of every county line sign in the country into the database.

This past month saw additions made by Gary, K4EXT of many pictures sent in by Rick, W5QP in KS. Here's the W5QP mobile at Russell, KS



W5QP Russell, KS

Silver, N9QS, added a few more in IL, and NX0X/KB0MMH sent in a dozen from IL, OH and KY



N9QS Cass/Fulton, IN



NX0X/KB0MMH Edwards, IL

Mary AB7NK and Neil K7SEN, got one of the very few missing signs in TX – El Paso.
Now only five to go out of 254!



AB7NK/K7SEN El Paso TX

Here's K0DEQ in Barton, MO



K0DEQ Mobile – Barton MO

There are now over 2500 county line signs in the database!

Some states like IL and IN still need over 20 each, while MO just needs one – Dunklin at this point. GA is a real disaster area with over 60 needed, and LA needs over 30! KY still needs 30 to go! Just five to go in TX. Even FL still needs 18 despite lots of mobile activity there. Go figure!

Kyle, WA4PGM, went in a bunch in VA, NC, and MD. Here's Charles City, VA with a nice colorful sign.



Charles City County, VA - WA4PGM

Paul, WD9EJK, caught the mobile at the county line of Livingston, IL.



WD9EJK Livingston, IL

KC7QOP sent in a few , with some description to go along

Here's Clatsop OR



KC7QOP: Clatsop County's claim to fame extends back to the early days of World War II, June 21, 1942. The Japanese submarine I-25 surfaced at night and fired 17 shells at Fort Stevens, which protected the Oregon side of the entrance to the Columbia River. This was the only Axis Powers attack on a US military installation in the lower 48 states, and many accounts of the attack can be found on the Internet. The same submarine came back in September and used its take-apart seaplane to drop incendiary bombs in the forest near Bandon, OR. This is believed to be the only time the US mainland was bombed by a wartime enemy.

In August 1943, the USS Patterson destroyed the I-25 near Australia, but some Japanese crew members had been transferred to other duties, and survived to provide accounts of the attack on Fort Stevens.

Physical damage was slight, a few downed power and telephone lines, and a ruined backstop on the softball field. The shelling benefited the Japanese Empire mostly in terms of psychological warfare, since the US reacted by spending more time and effort on coastal defenses. This was Japan's answer to the famous Doolittle bombing raid on Tokyo just two months earlier, and it provoked the same response in the US that the Doolittle raid produced in Japan.

Here's Columbia OR



KC7QOP: Columbia County seems somewhat overlooked, and appears to be famous for... well, nothing. At least nothing I could find. It is the home to several large lumber mills and paper products plants. Ocean going ships can navigate the Columbia River, so Columbia County has deep water port facilities

Columbia County is the site of the Trojan Nuclear Power Plant, shut down in 1992, after Portland General Electric, the plant operators, spent many years and millions of dollars dealing with safety problems and ballot measures intended to close the plant. When the plant was operating, the steaming cooling tower was easily visible from I-5, and the facility was something of a landmark. The reactor building and the cooling tower are long gone, and only a storage facility for spent fuel remains. When I drove by, there was not even a sign at the entrance, just some neatly mowed grass and an unmarked security gate.

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Rick, W5QP filled in many missing ones in LA this month. We're making progress.



W5QP Ascension LA



Phelps NE by NX0X/KB0MMH

You can find the County Sign Database here:

<http://www.charchive.com/cntys.asp>

If you go there you can find the link to the 'county sign needs page' as well to see if you might be able to help out.

West VA QSO Party

There were a few mobiles out. N8II ran on cw in counties. Missed him in one I needed but that's the way it goes when you are doing 3 things at once. My bad. On SSB, KD8MQ spotted in many. Didn't see any other mobiles out but that doesn't mean there weren't any on SSB.

A few fixed stations were spotted, one on cw, at least two on SSB.

From the 3830 contest reflector:

WN4AFP fixed - 11 cw 24 ssb 17 mults

My first WVQP! Score includes 3 bonus station contacts. Thanks to the mobiles and the WV 40m "groups". 73 Dave

OM2VL 19 cw 39 ssb 25 mults

Only 1 mobile station found - N8II/M 6 QSO/5 County.

I tried CQ on SSB 15 / 20 /40m) and had nice pileup, but unfortunately only few stations from WV. I heard some stations around 7.200 and also over 3.800 but I can transmit on this bands only below of this frq ... :(

It is very big handicap for me on all QSO parties, that stations are don't working below 7.200 and 3.800.

Despite of this my score is a little bit higher than in 2013.

Score included 700 bonus points for W8WVA - 80m CW, 40m CW, 20m CW/SSB/RTTY, 15m CW/SSB.

Thank you very much for nice QSO's, QSY's ! 73 Laci OM2VL

On the Road with N4CD – First AK

The time had come to hit the last district. I turned in the car in Anchorage and rode the motel shuttle back to the motel the evening before. I had an early flight before the rental place opened, and the shuttle would drop me right at the check in counter for the flight to Juneau, saving me 1/4 mile of hauling bags from the rental car return place. The failing wheel needed all the help it could get. That worked fine, taking the 5:40 am shuttle from the motel for the 7:30 flight to Juneau. Soon it was off on a 737-200 to the capital of AK. There is no way to drive there other than take the car ferry from ANC which takes a day or two to get there. You fly or come by ship. It's a big cruise liner destination.

This time I reserved a 'compact car' with Avis. What did they want to give me? A Chevy Sonic! I don't fit in those. Two years ago at the State Fair of TX, you could 'test drive' a Chevy Volt on a 1 mile course. You barely got up to 20 or 25 mph. But FIRST, you had to 'test drive a Sonic'. Dang. My knees were bent back, I could barely get to the pedals and drive the midget car even for a mile. It's not for 6 foot tall folks. Well....that was it. Sonic or 'upgrade'. Big upgrade fee....but....I needed a car. So I paid (bring money) for a Chevy Impala – 'full size' car. This was the last one to run in AK....had to have a car. I got a 'brand new' Impala – white- and I was the first 'renter'. It had 1500 miles on the odometer somehow. I would have to be super careful not to scratch it or they would come after me! They let me know it was their new 'baby'. Dang, I'd rather have a 5 year old beat up one where another possible scratch wouldn't be noticed!

I looked for a place I had run before. Didn't find it so I headed along the coast road till I

got to Auke Bay. There I found a harbor parking lot. This is back from the mountains and you have a good shot back to the states. Powerline about 200 feet away. Not great. Most of Juneau is crammed against snow covered mountains that run SE to NW. You look right into mountains going to the USA. Even worse, most hams and most of the population here live in the Valley- which is even more worse to get a signal out of. That's near the outlet of the Mendenhall Glacier. (AK has over 1000 glaciers) blocked by steep mountains both sides.



N4CD/m Auke Bay, First District

The harbor parking lot worked OK.....a bit of QRN(less than S1) but good shot back home. I put together things. You could get to the battery on the Impala, but what a mess of connections on top with a distribution box and who knows what else under tons of plastic. But you could get to the battery terminals OK and I used the big clip leads to hook on. Double checked. Triple checked. There is no recovering from a wrong connection. Came back and checked again before plugging power cable to radio. Assembled antenna on a map laid out to keep crud off the magnets. Then I laid a map on the top of the car and carefully put the mag mount on top. Any scratch would show so had to be REAL careful. Worked out OK...maybe a bit less signal as coupling went down. It was time to 'get 'er done' for the MP folks.

I gave Joyce a jingle on the phone. Had phone access at Auke Bay. Hundreds of sailboats in the harbor. I hadn't eaten for six hours and breakfast was a banana and an orange before I took the motel shuttle. Think I grabbed an Egg McMuffin at the airport. Still had not much to eat. I was running on adrenaline. The first "Mobile Diamond"

contact was with Joyce, N9STL. Wowie. I just finished up Mobile Diamond. Actually 'first to get done' unofficially. I had arranged with Joyce, N9STL, Gene, K5GE, Scottie, N4AAT, and Bob N8KIE, to have them all send in a copy of the log data of the last four QSOs to Bob, KC6AWX. Before they sent in their logs. I had already sent in the other 3073, with just the last four left blank. Plus of course, data on the 500 required QSO's with 3 contacts or more on each of two bands. All paper logs.

As far as I can tell, Joyce got the first email off with those contacts.

Next, I worked Terry, WQ7A (not quite done yet). He did the same. Gene was right there and he was worked next. He sent in the data for N4CD on the last 4 contacts. Then he sent in his log. It gets a bit messy right here. Well, first, we put Scottie and a page full of others in the log. Scottie was now finished up. I tried 15 cw...not much happening, 15 ssb – even less. 14 SSB - Joe, N5UZW went in the log. He was now finished up for MD. That's five folks within 15 minutes finishing up for MD. I was too busy putting out the counties to 'also' send in my data, if I even had a data connection. For the past 3 counties, I had no data connection – I was out in the boonies intentionally for the previous 3. The only time I had data was in the motels where you get wi-fi as part of the big nightly fees – hi hi.

I put things out till the pile reached the noise level and the relays were done. It wasn't the optimum time of day but seemed to work OK. I was exhausted....I could barely function.

Well, the phone rings. It's Terry, WQ7A. Seems that Bob, KC6AWX, was holding firm to the 'strict' interpretation of the rules that said 'the applicant' must submit all data. Others could not submit the last 4 county data. It had to come from me. Well, OK....I got out my spotting pad (hadn't even made it to the motel yet - getting the run done was Priority Number One....getting folks their contacts was job Number One. Likely it was too early too for motel check in time. Luckily I barely had a data connection. I zipped Bob, KC6AWX an email with the last 4 county data.

It turns out that since Bob would not accept the 'data from others' that the full logs from Gene, K5GE and Scottie, N4AAT had arrived 'before' that log data directly from Bob, N4CD. So Gene was initially awarded Nr 1 (he didn't want nr 1), and Scottie, N4AAT nr 2, then N4CD nr 3 as that was the order in which the applications from the 'applicants' were received. He ignored the date/time of the emails from others with the N4CD data which had arrived first.

Well...let us say there was some 'heated discussion' about that order, and fortunately,

Bob, KC6AWX used some discretion as Awards Manager after consulting with the MARAC President, and within a few hours, it was decided that all those who had finished up with the same county, on the same day, with the same mobile, on the first runs, would receive Nr 1 each. That included Bob, N8KIE, Scottie, N4AAT, Gene, K5GE, Joe, N5UZW and Bob, N4CD. Five had finished 'at the same time' and all would be issued Number One. After that, it would go back to normal order. That niftily solved a 'sticky situation' and was 'fair to all'. All had worked hard to get those five to the point where they all needed the 'never run' AK 'counties' to finished. Hundreds of thousands of miles of driving, tens of thousands of bucks spent on trips to everywhere from San Juan Island to Dukes and Nantucket to every one of the other 3073 counties. Bob, N8KIE had done the HI treks, not cheap in anyone's book. So 'all' would share in the glory, and that day five completed the Mobile Diamond award, and others are closing in (Terry, WQ7A and Joyce, N9STL). Success. Plus of course, the other county hunters got all those counties as they were run. Counts for Master Platinum (for everyone), for Bingo, Stars, etc.

The Impala had ZERO noise with the engine running. It's got an electronic dashboard.....and a fold out key from the key fob. It took me a while to figure out how to even start this car! I had to break out the owners manual to figure out how to use the 'electric parking break'. Sort of like the Subaru – there's no pedal, just a switch on the dashboard. You press to engage. Pull up on the Subaru, push in on the GM car to release.

There was a store nearby and I had to have some food. The adrenaline rush was over and I was ready to collapse. Not good. Had to have food. Ate some junk food but the calories and liquid were desperately needed. Whew.

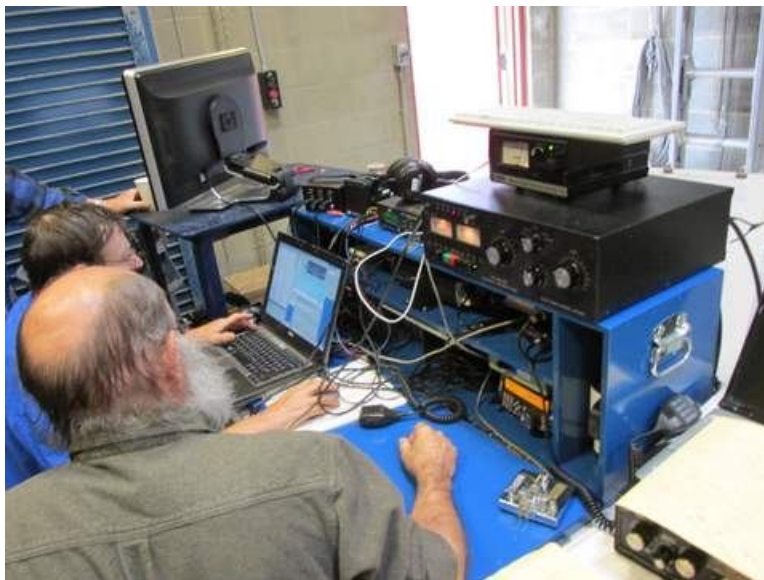
A bit later I headed back to Juneau to the motel – Super 8. Not too far. You can't drive more than 40-50 miles on any road here. They end. Super 8 would be home base for the next couple days.

I found the location of the Field Day site next day. They'd start setting up at 5pm Friday afternoon putting up the 100 foot high motorized tower – with a tri-bander on top, and the attachment point for the V in the 600 foot wire Vee Beam they put up each year. Come evening, and the crew headed out to the two far towers had to stop. A bear was in the area and you don't mess with them. It wandered on after a while, and they got back to stringing out the 600 feet of wire, which goes up 90 feet, and getting the antenna up for the next day. Here, Field Day starts at 10 am local time. Alaska is 8 hours from GMT. So things had to be ready. The antenna is fed with open wire line. It's the same set up that they were using when I visited in 2002!

Like all the other districts, I'd contacted folks in Juneau about using the station for a bit to make some county hunter contacts. No problem.....

In the morning, I headed out at 'optimum time' – here 6:30 am – well a bit before to get set up to run at 6:30 AM(1430 z) . Headed out to the vicinity of the FD site. It was back away from the mountains and they hold it at a Fire Training Center. That worked well, and the noise was NIL. Put more contacts in the log from the First. Then off to breakfast at the motel since it's later on weekends. Then over to the Fire Training Center where they had shown up to get things together by 10am.

This year they used on of the bays in the building for their set up. They have a 'to go box' housing the HF radio, the VHF and UHF radios, tuners, power supplies, etc. It's 'new' this year so there was some debugging it. Otherwise, it was a 'grab and go' set up for emergency use.



KL7JRC 'to go' box set up

Things were working at 9:30 and I put the set up on the CHN CW freqs. Worked another bunch as N4CD/KL7. Fixed. The Vee Beam has a good 11-12 dB gain, pointed right at Colorado. You can work the country, but it's tough getting through the QRM wall. Soon it was coming up on 10am and FD start time. It seems they have a

'shortage' of ops that want to get on, and only 2 or 3 cw ops. So I was recruited to start out FD. We did on 20M SSB....doing a lot of search and pounce since it would be hard for us to hold a frequency. Just too much QRM. The west coast folks, if they have a beam, have it pointed east. Folks to the east, if they have a beam, are hearing the west coast pounding in. Still, we had luck. If they were S3-5, we'd get them eventually. Below that, it was hard, and most stations were S1 to S3. I started on SSB and did an hour and a half of work before pooping out. Still running at 30-40% of normal. I let someone else do it for a while. Later I'd put in a few hours on CW and the next morn even more on CW. Charlie, KL7IG is one of the few CW ops – you might give him a jingle if you need First on CW.

At noon, the club has a big picnic/barbeque. About 40 folks show up for the chow down. I didn't turn down the food. I was hungry. Hamburgers, cheesburgers, hot dogs for the kids, cakes, cupcakes, soda, potato salad , regular salad, the whole set up. Nice.....that lasted for a good hour and then most of the folks disappeared although a few stuck around to operate. It sprinkled a bit so the canopies they put up outside were needed. The station was in an bay of the center....running off a generator.

The motorized tower was fairly new too -



KL7JRC Motorized 100 foot tower



N4CD at the KL7JRC Field Day – Percy Pic

The club used N1NN logging software. We had a keyer with messages in it as well. Set the speed down around 20 wpm. Same for when I was mobile...the keyer was set at 20 wpm. Faster made it harder to exchange reports.

That was a lot of fun and I got in some hours of operating time there. Since I had good success before Field Day, and conditions were rotten after FD ended, I didn't get back on the air afterwards. The folks have to take down the big antenna, lower the tower, pack away the gear, etc. After helping for a while, I headed back to the motel to rest up. Tomorrow would be a 'long day'.

The flight was early.....7am. I called American to see if I could get the later flight at 1pm. Oh, yeah...it would cost me over \$500 in 'change fees' if I wanted to do that. My flight to TX was at 8:40 pm. Nope, not going to do that! The original ticket was only \$320 round trip from ANC to JNU. That meant killing almost 12 hours at the airport in ANC. There's only 2 flights a day between the two.

So Monday morning, my work completed, and the credit cards overheated, and no need to spend more time in ANC or anywhere else, I got up at 5am, and was over at the airport at 5:30. Missed the Super 8 breakfast. Dropped off the rental Impala, hauled the suitcases 300 feet to check in. Fortunately the large bag could get checked through to Dallas (DFW airport). I gave the mag mount to Glenn, KF0LZ, to mail to me. I was too pooped to drag it home. Less weight. Maybe the wheel would make it home before total self destruction. Got a TSA pre-check so easy through the TSA routine. Got to keep my shoes on. I would not have to go through security again. Just stay

inside the secure gate area at ANC.

So it was off early on the plane to ANC – Boeing 727-200. Arrived before 9am and had almost 12 hours to kill. I had bought a paperback book – 450 pages, so that took a while to read. Had a breakfast at McD. Had a nice lunch. Had a nice dinner. Checked the K3IMC forum and killed time. It was a long wait for the plane back home. Finally it arrived at the gate. It's the ONLY flight that American operates to ANC. One plane up, same plane back two hours later. 7 hours more or less flying time. You might catch just a few Zzs between the 'beverage service' and other annoyances. You arrive home in Dallas at 6am Dallas time, which is 3am in the middle of the night AK time. Talk about 'jet lag'. It's 77 deg in Dallas, headed for 94. I get my bag...arrived safely ...and call the Super Shuttle number. 15 minutes later or so I'm picked up and 45 minutes later I'm home! What a day/night. Too many hours on the road. I cut off the last 6 or 7 days. No need to stay there.

Well, the trip up and back were frequent flyer miles, but the rest of the motels and car rentals added up. Plus the two jaunts to Nome(really expensive) and Juneau. I had my share of fun, enjoyed meeting the hams along the way- that was great. If you get up that way, give 'em a call/email and set up an eyeball. It looks like about one county hunter a year, average, heads to Alaska and runs the 4 counties. This year, Jimmy, K4YFH drove up and ran 3rd and 4th. If he made it elsewhere he wasn't spotted.

I hope the travelogue entertains you and informs you a bunch on Alaska. There's lots to tell....but here's the start. The MD bunch were great at getting things going and doing the relays and helping out along with others. Who knows what the next challenge will be but right now, I'm just going to finish next time, and think about heading to HI to finish up second time transmit. ha...then I'll have to worry about 3rd time. Took me 10 years of serious mobiling to do it the first time, now up to 12 years the second time with just HI to go....and who knows how far toward 3rd time I'll get, if I get done. Now that would be something. No one has finished 3rd time transmit all counties. You'd have to be nuts....well, like the rest of the awards like Mobile Diamond – hihi – when they came up with that, no one realized it would get done in 4 years. Yep, some county hunters (many many) are nuts. So it be! Are you having fun yet?

Awards Issued

Mobile Diamond #1	Gene, K5GE Scottie, N4AAT Bob, N4CD Joe, N5UZW Bob, N8KIE	6/27/14 “ “ “ “
Master Platinum #23	N0KV, Barry	6/21/2014
USACA #1245	Walt, W1ATV	6.4.2014
Bingo #355	NM2L, Greg	6/20/2014
Bingo Nr IV #5	N9QS, Silver	6/12/2014
5th Time #114	W0QE, Larry	05.30.14,
CW IV # 10	W0QE, Larry	6.2.14
USA-CA Call Combo 1x3 #13	N9QS, Silver	5.22.2014,
USA-PA- N #21	WA9DLB, Tony	6/27/2014
USA-PA-W #12	N9STL, Joyce	6/24/2014
USA-PA – All Prefixes #4	N9STL, Joyce	6/24/2014

Upcoming Events for County Hunters

No QSO Parties noted in July. We'll be back in QSO party season shortly as the days get 'shorter' and folks get back to the 'school routine' and are home after the summer.

That's it for this month!

73 de N4CD

