County Hunter News

March 1, 2011
Volume 7, Issue 3

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

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

The County Hunter News will 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.

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CW County Hunter Nets run on 14.0565, 10.122.5, and 7056.5, with activity occasionally on 3556.5 KHz. Also, with low sunspot activity, most of the SSB activity now is on 'friendly net' 7188/7185 KHz. The cw folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.9155, and 28.0565 when sunspots better). Look around 18135 or 18.132.5 for occasional 17M SSB runs.

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 . Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at www.CHNewsonline.com

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Notes from the Editor

February was a good month for snagging some counties, but with winter weather moving in, the mobile trips and activities was down a bit in early Feb as severe storms stopped folks in their tracks. 32 below in KS. 27 below in OK breaking records. More snow and blizzards up north. Weather got better for a few weeks, then storms continued up north.

It's the start of QSO Party season and we report on them one by one in this issue. We are off to a good start!

It appears 'spring has sprung' a bit and the weather looks great for the end of Feb. Even better, the solar flux is up over 100 (hitting 130) meaning the upper bands should be opening!

1) Sunspots – We got sunspots with the count up to 100, and the solar flux up to 114! We are back to where we were four years ago. 17M and 15M are coming back to life. Unfortunately at the same time, we are seeing major solar flares of the most intense kind with radio blackouts, auroras at high latitudes, and whacky propagation. At one point, KB6UF, about 400 miles south of me was 40 over on 20M, only to disappear completely two minutes later. I could barely copy him on 40M. Next day he was a good 55. It looks like this sunspot cycle is getting set to rev up, but we've been misled before on this 'start'. Keep your fingers crossed.

2) Boy Scout Radios – more - update – I was searching along looking for something else, and discovered another ad in Boy's Life in 1963. This time for an official kit radio – the Hallicrafters S-119 Sky Buddy II Receiver kit. Strange things happen.

[N] **DE LUXE KNIFE** — Keen knife has five blades of high-quality steel that punch, lift bottle caps, drive both regular and Phillips head screws, open cans, and perform many other jobs. Emblem on stag-type handle.
No. 1046 ..... **$2.75**

[O] **SHORT-WAVE RADIO KIT** — Bring in radio broadcasts from all over the world on this short-wave receiver by Hallicrafters. Assembling complete kit is great fun for anyone with little radio know-how. Range covers standard broadcast and two short-wave bands. Operates on AC current. Kit includes three dual-purpose tubes plus selenium rectifier, built-in speaker, built-in antenna for standard broadcast band, earphone jack, voice/code switch, pilot light, simple step-by-step instructions.
No. 1804 ..... **$29.95**

I didn't realize that. Below the ad, they had an illustration of the Hallicrafters S-119 Sky Buddy II in Boys Life October 1963, page 50. The Sky Buddy II was the only receiver kit that Hallicrafters ever offered! They offered a novice transmitter (the HT-40) as a kit as well.

In 1955, Heathkit was advertising the BR-3 Broadcast superhet kit – 5 tubes. $17.50 plus $4.50 for the cabinet. Hallicrafters had the S-38D for sale, but it was $49.95, a lot of money in 1955! (most kids probably got 25c or 50c a week allowance!).

3) Mobile Activity in February (starting 1/25/11)

Frank, AA9JJ, Kay, N9QPQ and Bob, N8KIE ran all of the HI islands starting in Kauai. Terry, WQ7A did the relays for them on SSB.

Fred, K0FG, was running all over south TX.

Ron, KB6UF, took a trip to MS to finish running the state for MD and cleaning up lots of needs.

N9QS, Silver, returned from FL.

Jimmy, K4YFH was running all around in FL.

Jim, K0ARS, put them out in many states on cw.

Larry, W7FEN, put out a few in WA.

Jim, N4JT was up in VA running.

WD0T was out in SD running counties.

San, N7PIB, and K6LLL were running in northern CA.

Jim, N9JF headed down to MS on a business trip – after being on from other business trips.

K4XI ran a few in south FL.

A few folks headed south to Texas in mid month. Steve, AK8A, Ron, KB6UF, Ray, AB4YZ, Barry, N0KV, and Sandra, N0KV, Matt, W0NAC, and Sharon, N0LXJ, KY0E, Milt, Steve, AK8A, Don, W9GUY, KA1YZV, Don, Norm, W3DYA, and Ron, N5MLP were heard headed to south TX.

Jim, K0ARS, was out and about on cw, and Jim, N9JF was all over the place – PA and other states on business trips running them on 40 and 80M in th evenings.

Don, W9GUY, spotted out and about in IN. Then headed to LA and then south TX.

Jimmy, K4YFH, was putting out counties in FL.

KI4ACW was spotted in a few AL counties mobile.

Fred, K0FG, was seen headed down to TX.

K8OOK/N8IPG were spotted running in KY, then GA into FL.

Jack, N7ID, ran a few in ID.

Larry, N2OCW ran a few in WV, VA.

Jim, W4HSA, ran a few in VA and heard on SSB as well.

NA8W was spotted in OH mobile.

Doug, WA4UNS, was out in NC mobile.

W3DYA was busy in the LA QSO Party, along with NO5W, Chuck, and other mobiles. More later on the QSO Parties. Later he headed to south TX – was spotted on 17 and 15m cw, too. .

Gene, K5GE, tested out the new mobile and ran a few.

Ralph, WA4HXG, was out mobile in TN.

Sterling, WA7JHQ, headed out for ID, running them on CW.

KM1C was spotted in Litchfield and Fairfield CT.

Ray, AB4YZ, headed on down to FL.

KG4WLX ran some in GA and AL on 40M SSB.

KI4ACW ran some in AL on SSB.

Kerry, W4SIG, made a trip to AR to run counties on SSB and CW.

KW4V was out and about in FL on cw.

KJ8V/KJ8W team were out and about in OH.

W8FNW/W4FNW ran some in FL on SSB.

On the Road with N4CD

It was still January, but the weatherman had provided a few days of 70 degree sunny weather as a break to the normal cycle of 50 degree highs and lows near 30. There had not been a lot of mobile activity especially up north with the snow and blizzards and very cold weather.

There were a few counties to the east I could run for Mobile Diamond credit and several of them were needed by others so I planned a day trip for Saturday. Fred, K0FG was headed down to south TX to enjoy the 80s down there. Ron, KB6UF, planned a one day trip to MS to run a dozen or so. Dave, KE3VV was down in south FL putting them out. You can get to most of the seldom run counties on good back roads to the east in TX.

I packed up the car at 0600Z local (1200z) and headed to Rockwall TX for the first county. It always seems to be needed for someone. Wow....6:30 in the morning on a Saturday and the I-635 beltway is full of cars but the speed was still 60mph. (It's a total zoo during rush hour and often 15 mph stop and stop and go and stop).

The bands were barely open with long skip till on 40M at 7:30am local (1330Z). The QRN level in the mornings is really high too – wonder if it coming in on skip from somewhere else – it's everywhere. It fades away by 1500Z local usually. . Then it was through Rains and Wood, which I had just run a few months ago in the TQP, but alas did not work a MP holder so I had

to visit them again. After that, over to Camp and Upshur, which don't get run that much as they lie between the I-20 and I-30 interstates and few get off to snag them.

W4SIG, Kerry, needed Marion on 20M cw for a LC in TX for that band. With help from W0GXQ we finally managed a contact. I stopped on the county line(Marion/Cass) but was facing southwest. I tried moving the car to the other side of the road pointing northeast which is better by an S unit or two since the cw antenna is on the back trunk deck (as measured by the W0QE antenna shoot off a few years back in CO). That did the trick.

40M was the best band most of the day, but 30 and 20 perked up. Only a few contacts on 17M were made – with WQ7A and a few east coasters in the log, and of course, K0DEQ. I ran up through Morris to the county line of Red River and Bowie – many seemed to need Red River. Cliff and Nelda had run these a few weeks before, but not on cw or 30M or 17M. The MP holders were well represented with K5GE, N2OCW, N4AAT, WQ7A, N5UZW helping out.

Ed, N4UJK, had just started over (on his 9th time) so he needed everything. It's nice to have a half dozen like him on any given day so you can be sure of at least a handful of contacts even in 'green stamp' counties. Hi Hi

Ron, N5MLP, had been waiting for McCurtain OK for a long time, so I scooted up there on Route 37 snagging him that one for him. I could also use it for Mobile Diamond as well. So many counties, so little time. Then it was back to the fastest way home via Lamar and Fannin. Golly, someone needed my home county, so I ran it. Often mobiles have tendency to not run their home counties at the end of a long trip – just mobile on home the last miles. Ed, N4UJK needed it, as did WA4UNS on CW. (one mobile's home county turned out to be the LC WBOW for a county hunter, and that county hunter had to wait until another mobile traveled through the county! So run your home county every now and then!)

The weather was great. I snagged 8 new Mobile Diamond transmit counties and enjoyed the nice warm weather. Hope I hit something you needed. The winter weather returns here on Tuesday with 'winter mix' possible, so I got some county hunting in during late January. From here on out for the next few months, there's a state QSO party every weekend to keep folks busy regardless of the outdoor weather. I'll be chasing some of them myself when not out.

Minnesota QSO Party

KN4Y, Ed, had 84 QSOs in MN from FL. He got 20 new no-star mobile counties, too.

from the 3830 Contest Reflector

W0ZQ/M

I think the solar flare that sent the K index to 6 on Friday night did not help propagation on the low bands, especially Saturday morning. However,as poor as 80m was in the morning, 20m seemed to be rocking by mid day which was a very nice surprise. Over the last several MnQP contests, either 40 or 80m was the money band with 20m as a distant third. While its certainly fun working everyone on 20m, it also means total mults were down as it was very difficult to work in-state this year.

I worked the TOD/STR/POP/DOU county line area in the morning hours, then hopped on I-94 towards Fargo to work the OTT/GRA/WIL/TRA corner in the afternoon for a total of eight counties. I'm a solo op/driver, so when driving I work 20m phone and use a digital voice recorder & log those contacts after the contest. While the weather was pretty good with temps in the upper 20's, there is lots and lots of snow out there making it a bit harder to find a safe parking spot. I saw a wolf trot about 50 yards away from me while I was sitting in a rural church parking lot in GRA (far west central MN) ... just me, the wolf, and a lot of snow around - sure makes antenna change time more interesting.

New for me this year was N1MM with Windows7 running on a used netbook. For all these years I've been a DOS/NA groupy so I thought I would join the modern era. With the netbook the keyboard is smaller, so sorry for the Q's that I fat fingered - first thing that I learned is where is the "ESC" key so that I could back out of whatever error I was in .... the <ESC> key got a good workout. The touch pad/mouse is a significant source of "operator error".

The shack & equipment was a Subaru Forester (135K - starting to like oil), heated seats, FT897D, LDG tuner, N1MM/Windows7, a MicroKeyer, and roof mounted hamsticks or a MFJ manual tune screw driver with a 12' whip when stopped. Everything worked well and with the new netbook I was able to skip the power inverter that was required for my old DOS based laptop and that was a source of noise, especially on the low bands.

Many many thanks to all that work me during the contest - the last 28 minutes of the contest from TRA on 80m was the best ... I was tired and it was getting dark with just 28 minutes left in the contest - I stopped, got set-up, called CQ MnP on 80m just once, and 28 minutes later I looked up and the contest was over and I had 54 new Q's in the log - that was fun. Also thanks to those who stood by on 20m when asked too so that I could work a few DX stations that were

calling.

I plan to be on from the WiQP next month, so keep the rigs warmed up and the antennas pointed this way. “

ND0C/QRP - Nobles County

“I took a "red-eye" flight Friday night to get back home for the contest and got about 5 1/2 hours of sleep before the start.

Activity seemed good and 15 meters even cooperated a bit with a short opening to the west coast. I thought I'd work more on 15 while it was open, but I think the out-of-state stations assumed it wouldn't be open and didn't check. I did some S&P but also had a lot of good runs which are always nice especially when running QRP. It was really tough to find and hold a frequency on 20 meter SSB. 40 SSB was very disappointing - but it seemed very long and I couldn't stir up much activity either running or S&P.

I probably should have spent more time on 80 to rack up more counties - maybe a strategic error. I never really know how much time to spend chasing the mobiles vs. running and picking up state mults in the process. If I could do this one more often than once every 6 years I might get a better feeling of how to do it!

I had a blast and the time just flew by (but I was in a bit of a sleepy daze from the start). - See you next year (hopefully)!

Station: Yaesu FT-897D running 5 watts; 3 el triband Yagi at 48 ft and inverted vee with apex at 45 ft.”

WB8JUI (OH)

I always look forward to the MNQP. There is always lots of fast and furious mobile activity by some great operators throughout the entire contest.

I went out about an hour before the start to chisel ice and snow off the base of my vertical. Back inside to find everything loaded OK this year.

I can usually depend on at least a few 80 meter Qs at the very beginning. Not so this year. 80 was very noisy and I was only able to make one contact before going to 40. 40 was long most of the day with weak signals from MN and a very

strong NH7O. Most 20 meter Qs were at ESP levels.

This year's mobile list:
N0PI (23), K0PC (21), N0IJ (18), N0IM (13), N0EO (12), W0ZQ (10), N0UR (8), W0AA (8), KE0G (5), and N0HJZ (4). There are some great ears in that list.

Nice to catch a few 160 Qs at the end, including N0UR/STE with a strong signal.

NM2L (GA) - 48 contacts CW

N6MU (CA)

Strictly a 20/15 contest out here. 15 was open all day with better sigs than 20. As usual, kudos to all the mobiles who kept it interesting. Top mobiles for me were N0IM with 14 Qs followed closely by N0IJ with 13.

N2CU (NY)

“Conditions were pretty bad - no QSOs on 80m all day until almost dark and 20m during daylight wasn't much better. Another fine job by the mobiles - N0PI 20, N0IM 19, K0PC 18, N0IJ 15, N0EO 13, W0ZQ and N0HJZ 9, N0UR 8, W0AA and KC0DMF 5, KE0G 4, and WG0C 1.

N2WN (TN)

That was a wild ride...

The start was so-so kinda bummed at missing N0EO first two counties, he was loud, but I wasn't *sigh* figure there was a fair amount of QRN up North.

Things improved and by the half way point I was ahead of last year, but then the new county count started to drop. Wound up missing 3, had hoped to add one or two more than last year.

The change in points for SSB QSOs helped my score. Had very little trouble raising most, a few way down in the mud wound up NIL.

Both 40 and 80 went long early. Was hearing EU on 80 LOUD very early. 160 had major EU signal MD0CCE was a solid 589, but no MN heard.

The mobiles/rovers were great, as always, and they were fun to chase. The tally

looks like this: K0PC 24, N0IJ 20, N0IM 15, N0PI 15, W0ZQ 12, W0AA 8, N0HJZ 7, KC0DMF 4 and KE0G 4.

K0PC - 983 contacts

I really enjoy the MN QSO Party and this year was no exception. The view from the front seat of the car was wonderful and the weather cooperated. Most of the roads were in very good condition and my driver John W9DND did a great job on a new route this year.

The propagation was challenging at times with 80M & 40M suffering from the unsettled conditions. But I was happy to have three bands to work this year. Last year I had trouble with 20M tuning and only had one QSO. This year I went to a completely manual tuning control and had no problems. In fact, Murphy never found us all day. The worst thing that happened was my Nestle Crunch bar got soft because the heater was blowing on it.

The pileups were amazing. The last-10 rate was over 200 many times and was at 238 once when I looked. The overall rates really picked up in the last four hours averaging 137 QSOs per hour.

My QSO count was down by 43 from last year but the multiplier count was up by 4. So my final score is higher this year. Having the 20M antenna back really helped with the mults.

Missed state/province mults:
AK, ME, MT, NV, SD, AB, NB, NL, NU, NT, PE, QC, SK, YT

Worked 24 MN counties, the same number we activated.

My heavy hitter list contains many familiar calls:
24-KB9S, N2WN, WA3HAE
23-K4AMC
22-K8IJ
21-WB8JUI
19-N8II
18-N2CU, W0BH
16-VE3CX, W0GXQ, W3DYA
15-K0HNC, N0AT, NT2A, W0EAR, W0MHS, W8TM
and many more...

N0IJ

Rolled out at 4:30 and on the road heading for the start at 6:00. Roads were fine and Terry's ol' Betsy ran fine for us, but some tell tale oil splatter on the back was noticed at the finish, and this may well be her last MNQP. At 275K miles, the end is probably near. Super effort by the driver and we made all 24 counties within a maximum deviation of 5 minutes from plan. Our actual time in Cook at the end was 19 minutes instead of the planned 11! 725 miles for the day and our usual 525 during the contest. Almost $175 in gas!

I have been pouring over the details, rates, highs/lows trying to decide if Doug, N0EO, was correct about the North thing for the start. All I can say was the start was brutal and I struggled with every trick I know to do better, but couldn't get the rate up until after the 4th hour. 20 came to life about 10, but then 80 just went dead. Even AIH was weak the last time we worked him or KB9S on 80. The worst came in Beltrami around 9:00--total of 12 Q's between 80 and 40 in 15 minutes. I never went back to 80, save one check & no Q's, until about 4:45-5:00. I believe the condx were somewhat worse up north as we improved as we got further south. Our furthest south point was the southern tip of Mille Lacs Lake. Shortly after that, we had our best rates of the day. I believe, also, that a bigger problem for us up north guys, was the lack of proximity to other southerly mobiles or fixed stations that one could possibly hear and work.

For the first time ever, I never heard another mobile, except KE0G, who called me 2 times, and I didn't just CQ on 80 early, I looked HARD for mobiles. I was really counting on doing better with instate stations in that I was able to almost totally null the engine noise from the Tahoe with the wonderful noise blanker on the K3. Also, with fresh batteries my noise canceling Heil headset took out the harsh sound of the glass pack mufflers--at least until the batteries ran down in the last hour or two. Gotta remember that in the future.

The mult total was made up of 42 states including DC, VE 1,3,4,7 and only 18 counties. States missed were ND, SD, MT, WY, AK, NV, AR, & LA.

Band break down was a real shocker: 102 on 80, 366 on 40, and 499 on 20.

Our one 17 minute break taken in hour 5 (3 minutes), and 6 (14 minutes)

Big guns worked the most:
N4VV & N8II 24
WA3HAE & K4AMC 21

N2WN & W2RR 20
NT2A & WB8JUI 18
W7GKF 17
N4JF, & N2CU 16
W1END, N4PN, N4UC, K4ZGB, & K8IJ 15
KO1U & W0AIH 14
W0BH, N6MU, & K4VIG 13
Probably the most fun was working Al, NH7O 11 times.

DX worked was SP5SA (5), OM2VL (3), and 3 different DL's.

It was fun!

N0IJ Team, W0TVD, driver--N0IJ, op.

W0BH (KS)

Propagation was really strange this year with virtually nothing heard or worked on 80 until the last hour. I did make a few very faint 20m Qs (none logged in 2007-2009), including one with W0ZQ/m which goes down as one of the faintest ESP Qs ever on this end. Great ears, Jon! I did hear N0IJ/m in Cook on 20 at the very end, but didn't have a chance of getting though the pileup.

My goal of 87 counties was dashed early when I lost N0EO/m in a couple of the northern counties. I didn't work HUB KNB KIT LKW and WAD, and I'm sure they were all on. With only 40m to check, I know I didn't miss the mobiles early on, so unless they didn't get to 40m, the band conditions just weren't there. Later, I started CQing on SSB and missed some mobiles I'm sure, but I already had the entire lower half of the state covered.

The mobiles did their usual terrific job and I'm already enjoying reading their 3830 reports. Top activity for me this year was K0PC/m (18) who also wins the consistently loudest into Kansas award for this year. I had to turn on the recorder in Martin County for a few minutes because the pileup was amazing .. one of the big reasons we get out there time and again. I'll send it to you, Pat!

The mobile stats for me : K0PC/18, N0PI/15, N0IJ/13, N0IM/10, N0EO/10, W0ZQ/9, N0UR/8, W0AA/5, KC0DMF/4, N0HJZ/4. Thanks for being out there!

N8II (WV)

MNQP was a welcome break from a really boring January month in the ham radio world. 20 was my bread and butter band, 40 very frustrating. For about half of the contest, 16Z-2045Z, the mobiles were mostly inaudible on 40. N9AUG was almost always in there when I was calling a mobile on 40. Towards MN, I only have an inverted vee at 50 ft, just not enough and the disturbed condx probably increased absorbtion as well. Some of the mobiles spent a lot more time on 40 than 20 which put me at a disadvantage, so I wasn't too optimistic about the outcome. Also, at times prop was marginal to SE MN; some of the mobiles were right at the noise level while the guys farther away were loud. In general, 20 was open from 15-22Z. I tried to limit SSB runs to no more than 10 minutes in order to keep up with the mobiles; this wasn't too much of a problem as when I was able to run a few, it dried up pretty quickly. Around 18Z was the peak of 20M activity with MN phone stations spread out from 14240-14300 in between the other activity on the band; it was a bit crowded anywhere around 14270. The darned XE RTTY (RTTY contest du jour) hurt any causal activity in the evening as 40 CW really opened up for me and the foreign BC above 7200 was pretty much blanketing the band. Suggest either moving the 40M phone frequency to 7170 or have 2 frequencies, the old one + one below 7200. If the CW activity slid down a bit, it would avoid the RTTY mess.

Many thanks to the mobiles! I'm sure the roads were not perfectly clear; I was glad to hear the WX warmed up to near normal for MN. I think I worked N0PI 3 times on 20 phone and SSB mobiles KC0DMF (3 Q's) and WG0C + KC0MKS (2 Q's each) were active. On CW John, N0IJ led the pack with 23 Q's in 18 counties; in order of Q's others gratefully worked were Pat K0PC - 19, Dan N0PI - 19, Dick N0IM - 18, Jon W0ZQ - 12, Doug N0EO - 9, Mark W0AA - 8, and Jim N0UR - 7.

Knight Kits

Way back in the 1950s, gosh that's now 60 years ago, there were several manufacturers selling kits for ham radio operators to build. That list included Heath, Knight, WRL, Johnson, and others who offered various units either only as kits, or in some cases, either kits or factory wired for a higher price. This is the era of the tube based receiver, transmitter and accessories. Eventually, Heathkit would successfully move into the solid state, transceiver, and SSB era, but Knight did not make a successful transition.

Knight made hundreds of kits – receivers, transmitters, power meter, grid dip meter, power supplies and test equipment such as signal generators, tracers, etc. They made metal detectors, auto diagnostic equipment, tube testers, hi-fi equipment such as amps, pre-amps, power amps,

tuners.

They had low end stuff like crystal radios. All of the kits were made by US suppliers, mostly in the Chicago area which was a major electronics center with radio and tv manufacturers and job shoppers that produced for dozens of brands of radios. (Major department stores would source their lines of equipment from the same half dozen or so factories). For twenty years, hams knew the name of Knight Kit and Allied Radio.

Transmitters

Here's a bit of the Knight Kit ham kit history – starting with the T-50 transmitter, then the T-60 and T-150 transmitter.

The first transmitter offered was the T-50 in the mid 50s. It was maybe the best they ever made.

Knight Kit T-50 Transmitter

It was crystal controlled, 50w input using a 6AG7 oscillator, and 807 output tube. The rectifier was a 5U4G tube. It was stable and trouble free. At that time, the novice power limit was 75 w input.

A few years later, Knight came up with the T-60 transmitter. They probably ran out of war surplus 807s at bargain prices. It ran 60W input to a 6DQB final, with a 6HF6 oscillator. Crystal control was required by the FCC for Novice operation. Naturally, once you got your general you could add in an external VFO.

The T-60/T-60A also had a carrier control AM modulation. Let us say it 'sucked' and you had a few watts out on AM with not all that much modulation on the signal.

Knight T-60 Transmitter

The Knight T-60 was paired with the entry level R-55 receiver.

For those who got their general class license, you could upgrade to the T-150/T-150A model or buy the V44 VFO or a competitive VFO and now move anywhere in the band.

For the T-150/A- 150W input and a built in (drifting)) VFO. It started with a 12BY7A VFO oscillator, a 6CL6 VFO amp, a 7189 driver and a pair of 6146 tubes in the output. It also had (very poor) carrier control modulation. Both the T-60 and T-150 covered 6M (badly).


Knight T-150 Transmitter

The 'companion' receiver to the T-150 was the R-100 receiver.

In the early 50s, the FCC created the Technician class license (5WPM code and the mostly the General Theory). Before 2M FM and repeaters, there were lots of nets on 6M, and folks wanted 6M on a radio if possible. It usually didn't work out well.

Now – here's the mystery unit. There may have been one or two prototypes built, but that may be all that ever existed. This is the Knight T-400 transmitter

It was listed as a $399 kit. The SSB generator option was another $70. The monitor scope option was yet another $38, an AM modulator (carrier control) was $28, a speech amp was $9. It might have been the equivalent of 1990s 'vaporware'. If you ever see one for sale, snap it up as fast as you can. Even the Knight Kit collectors have never seen one in person. One changed hands in the 1980s, so it appears at least ONE exists! It may have just been an empty case prototype for show.

The TX used a 7045/4X150A tube in the output.

It was advertised in the January 1960 catalog and listed as 'available in March'. That was the first and only time it was advertised apparently. You could send in $10 to reserve one. It's as common as unicorns.

Knight offered the V-44 external VFO to go with any of the T-50/60 series radios, and a PS-2 power/SWR meter.

Knight V-44 VFO

Receivers

Then we have the Knight Kit receivers. We've already covered the 3 entry level radios they started with – the Ocean Hopper, the Space Spanner, and Span Master which they sold tens of thousands of units over the course of a dozen years. Those were regenerative sets with 2 or 3 tubes in them. An amazing number of hams had these as their 'first' receiver before quickly moving up to a superhet.

In the beginning....

The world had some crystal radio sets – starter kits – the first being very primitive.

It was built on an 8x12 inch pine board!

Now, here some you may not have seen. This is a tube Knight DX er - as simple as it gets. It ran off battery power. (some D cells and a B+ battery, typically 45v.-67.5 v.

Knight Kit Dxer

This used two small miniature tubes, plug in coils that also fit the Ocean Hopper.

Now, here is an ultra rare Knight Kit Receiver – the solid state DX er from about 1963. I've

never seen one and just ran across the ad. Three transistors! Whoops..no, one showed up on Ebay in Feb. Sold for $410 !!! Ouch.

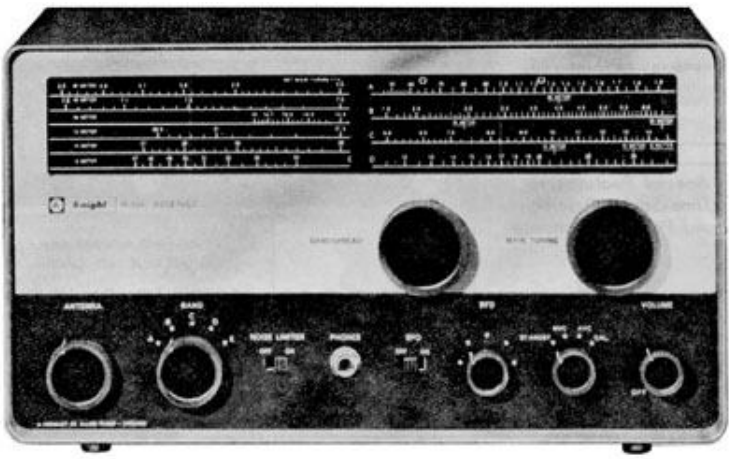
For the shortwave listener, they offered the Star Roamer Receiver which was an entry level superhet. One step up from the regen sets and another 50% more in price.

Knight Star Roamer Receiver

The Knight-Kit "Star Roamer" is a transformer-operated, single-conversion, general coverage receiver using 4 tubes and covering 200KHz to 400 KHz and 550 KHz through 30 MHz in 5 bands . This minimalist superhet receiver also uses a selenium rectifier and one diode each for detector and noise limiting. The audio preamp tube is a dual triode 12AX7. Audio output is either a 6AR5 or 6AK6. The other tubes are a 6BE6 converter and a 6HR6 IF amplifier.

This had about the same performance as the Hallicrafters S-38 units, the Lafayette KT-200, the National NC-60, and similar entry level units, except you could build it and it was a bit less money.

They offered two better receivers – the R55 and the R-100 for the ham market with 'calibrated ham bands'. Both came out and were followed with “A” models to fix problems in the original designs.



Knight R-55 Receiver

The R-55A is a transformer-operated single-conversion general coverage receiver covering 530KHz to 36MHz and 47 to 54 MHz in 5 bands with calibrated bandspread for the 80 to 6 meter ham bands. It sports dual IF amps, BFO, flywheel tuning, and a built-in speaker. The 6 tubes are used very efficiently with a couple of 6AW8A triode/ pentode tubes for dual function. The IF is 1650 KHz.

When performing properly, this radio is a fun and easy-to-use SWL receiver. It was also intended as a part of a "First" amateur radio setup. The companion transmitter was the T-60

The top of the line receiver for Knight was the R-100/R-100A

Knight R-100 Receiver

Here's a list of the specs for this unit. You'll note it isn't all that good compared to modern receivers – poor image rejection, not to great sensitivity, but it was 'state of the art' in the 1960s for moderately priced equipment.

Covers 540kc to 30mc in 4 bands and 80-10 meter ham bands. Bandspread on 80-10 meters. Better than 1.5uv sensitivity for 10:1 signal-to-noise ratio up to 10 meters. On 80 and 40 meters, sensitivity is .5 to .75 uv. Broadcast band is 4uv.

Selectivity is continuously variable from 300cps to 4.5kc at 6db down.

Image Rejection: 540-1650kc - 80db on low end, 40db on high end
1.6-4.6mc - 68db on low end, 40db on high end
4.4-12.4mc - 30db on low end, 25db on high end
12-30mc - 40db on low end, 20db on high end

IF: 455kc

Exalted BFO injection for SSB reception.
Built-in Q multiplier provides 60db notch in Null position.
Delayed AVC.
Noise limiter.
Coaxial and screw-terminal antenna connectors for 50 to 300 ohm lines.
Regulated B+ to HF oscillator.
Provision for building in crystal calibrator.

Tubes: 6BZ6 RF Amp
6BH6 Mixer & HFO
6AZ8 1st IF
6AZ8 2nd IF & 1st audio
6BC7 detector-AVC-ANL
6AW8A BFO & audio output
ECC83/12AX7 Q multiplier
6X4 full-wave rectifier
OB2 voltage regulator

Controls: Main tuning
Band-spread tuning
Band selector
Q-multiplier selectivity
C-multiplier tune
Peak-Off-Null
BFO pitch
RF gain
AF gain

BFO-MVC-AVC-ANL
Off-Stdby-Recv-Cal
Antenna trimmer

Optional components: S-8 speaker - 4 inch, 8 ohm (83 Y 728)
M-5 S-meter (83 Y 727)
X-10 100 kc Crystal Calibrator (83 Y 256)

You'd need a pretty good size radio bench to hold these – they weren't small by any means, and transmitters always weighed a fair amount with the big power transformers. If you moved up to something like a plate modulated HeathKit DX-100 transmitter, you'd be looking at 100 lbs plus!

Knight never included crystal filters in their radios (you had a Q multiplier) and never offered a radio with product detector for good SSB operation. They simply failed to make the transition to SSB.

Compare that to your 'all in the same box' IC-7000 transceiver that will run circles around this, plus be a transmitter as well. Under 10 lbs and small. Oh, you will need an external power supply for your IC-7000 if you want to use it a home, though! Hi hi But you can buy one of those that weighs less than 2 lbs if you want!

Toward the 1970s, they had a low end radio SWL kit – the Span Master II – rather rare.

Knight Span Master II Receiver

Allied Radio advertised a Knight "Span Master II" shown in this 1970 Allied Catalog picture.

In design, it appears physically to be almost a mirror image of the Olson RA-48. However, the Span Master II uses 5 tubes of the "All-American 5" AC-DC series filament variety (12AV6, 12BA6, 12BE6, 35W4 and 35C5 in place of the usual 50C5). It includes an isolation transformer that I appears to drop the voltage for the series string closer to the Japanese standard of 100 volts for that market. The IF transformers and certain other parts are identical to those in the RA-48. It was available in kit form and is likely from the same Japanese supplier.

Allied Knight Kit moved into the solid state era, it offered two other kits. These are rather rare as competitors such as Kenwood, Yaesu and others were penetrating the US market successfully with fully built units at very competitive prices. They were sourced from overseas most likely as the US was no longer competitive in radio/tv production for low cost items.

These were in the 1970s Allied Radio Catalogs.

Knight Solid State Star Roamer II Kit

It had a few simple ICs, a FET front end, but little more to offer. It could aslo be bought factory wired.

Here is a very seldom seen solid state kit as well – the R-195

Knight Kit R-195 Receiver.

This unit had a 'pre- built' RF section that included most of the RF. You constructed the chassis, tuning controls, other switches and pots, the power supply wiring and back panel connections, then wired in a circuit board. It was not a great performer with typical 1-2 microvolt sensitivity. It had calibrated ham bands, but NO Q multiplier, no crystal filter and no product detector. Two of these have shown up on Ebay in the past six months. Some question if it ever was offered in a kit revision or not – good question.

VHF Equipment

Knight offered two transceivers for AM VHF – the TR-106 for six meters and the TR-108 for 2M. This was back in the time when there was a lot of local activity on 6M and it and 2M AM were the main bands for local mobile use (before 2M FM took off). They looked almost identical except for the calibration on the dial.


This is the TR-108 2M unit

Both were externally the same. They ran about 20-15W plate modulated output, and were crystal controlled on transmit. You could buy a VF-107 to go with either unit for variable frequency on transmit.

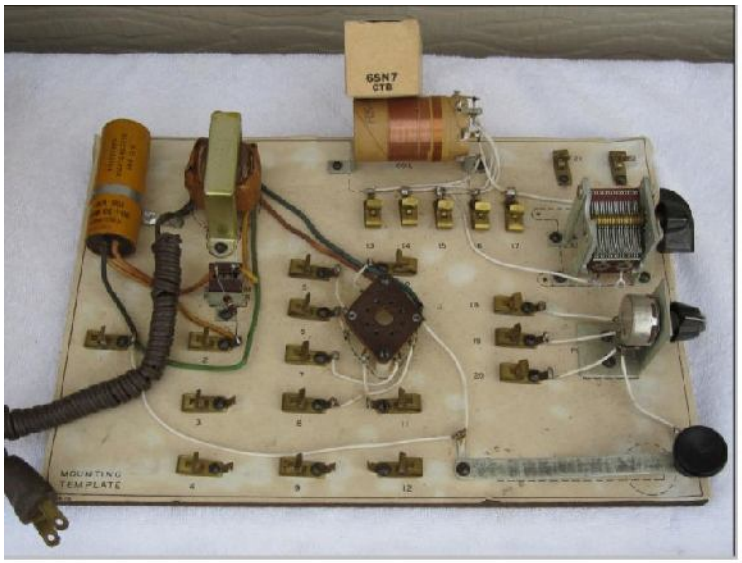
They had built in power supplies for 12V (about 7amp receive, 8 on transmit), and 121VAC. It used a vibrator for the high voltage supply.

Knight also sold a 100W type 'linear' amplifier VF-175 for 6 and 10/11M – allegedly for use with these two transceivers, but you can figure out who bought most of them. It used a pair of 6JE6s and would run 120W input on AM or 300W on SSB and take less than 4w of drive for AM, 7 or 8 watts for SSB.

Miscellaneous

During it's 20 year run, Allied/Knight produced at least 100 kits- from depth finders to electronic ignitions to auto testers, test equipment such as signal generators, TV alignment stuff, hi-fi amps, tuners, pre-amps, metal detectors, and all sorts of electronic gadgets. Allied catalogs also carried EICO and other manufacturers test gear as well.

Knight/Allied also produced thousands of Electronic Workshops and 40 in 1 Electronic Labs, 100 in 1 Labs, etc, that gave you a container full of parts, a breadboard, built in power supply, so you could conduct various electronic experiments from building audio amps, temperature sensors, simple radio, oscillators, etc.



Knight 6 in 1 Radio Lab – vintage early 1950s?/late 40s?

Sold for $113.50 on Ebay. Ouch! 6SN7 tube included

In the mid 70s, the catalogs offered 60 pages of kits, but all the ham gear was no longer offered after 1976 or so. Knight never made the transition to SSB and transceivers, and hams wanted to buy transceivers already assembled by this time. Putting a couple thousand parts into boards was no longer interesting and no longer saved money.

The Knight Kit business faded away in the late 70s. Kits for projects and factory assembled hi-fi and shortwave receivers were now offered under the Radio Shack name. Radio Shack offered a dozen SWL receivers.

Allied Radio is still a major parts warehouse.

Here's a great link to ads for the various Knight Kits over the years – 20 years of nostalgia

http://myweb.msoe.edu/~reyer/knight-kit/

Vermont QSO Party

Heard and worked two stations in VT on cw at the N4CD QTH. Very limited activity.

from the 3830 contest reflector

KS4X had 12 phone and 1 cw QSO with VT - 6 phone mults, 1 cw.

Call: W1NVT - 1840 SSB QSOs

Operator(s): W1SJ KB1FRW KE1AZ AA1SU

Had a blast handing out Vermont contacts and helping out in the MnQP, DeQP and BSSI contests!

Iron Ferrates

IRON in water is normally regarded a pollutant. Luke Daly, the boss of Ferrate Treatment Technologies of Orlando, Florida, however, plans to turn that thought on its head. He intends to use a chemically unusual form of iron to clean water up, not make it dirty.

Iron is found in the part of the periodic table known as the transition metals. Like all metals, these react with other elements by giving up electrons to form positively charged ions. Transition metals, though, give up different numbers of electrons in different circumstances, and thus have ions of various charges. Usually, iron loses two or three electrons. But in ferrates, which are compounds of iron and oxygen with non-transition metals like sodium and calcium, it loses six. That makes ferrates extremely reactive, and it is this reactivity which Mr Daly hopes to exploit.

First, ferrates are strong oxidizing agents. That means they destroy bacteria and viruses, and break up organic molecules with alacrity. Second, they are coagulants and flocculating agents. They attract other chemicals in the water, including dissolved metals, and precipitate them for easy removal. Moreover, once it has done its job, the iron in ferrates precipitates too, as iron oxide, leaving pure water behind.

The reason these wonder materials have not been used as water purifiers before is that their reactivity makes them unstable and thus difficult to store. Thomas Waite of the Florida Institute of Technology, an academic scientist on whose work the company has drawn, jokes that in the early days of his research he kept the whole world's supply of ferrates in a cabinet in his laboratory.

Ferrate Treatment Technologies' trick is to make ferrates on site, for instant use, rather than attempting to transport them to where they are needed. The firm's "Ferrator" uses three cheap raw materials—bleach, ferric chloride and caustic soda—to produce sodium and calcium ferrate at a price competitive, in terms of oxidising power, with more familiar water-cleaners like chlorine and ozone.

A machine small enough to be carried around in a pickup truck, Mr Daly claims, could generate enough ferrates to purify 75m litres (20m American gallons) of water a day. The system is now being tested at two plants in Florida. If all goes well, the first commercial Ferrators will be up and running later this year.

Source: The Economist

Transmitted Counties

A curious county hunter asked me about 'transmitted counties'. He noted that his logger program showed he had 1250 'transmitted counties' but only had 950 for "RAS". He was wondering what the difference was.

A 'transmitted county' is the total number of counties you have run which will count toward the 1500 required for Master's Gold award. Most people earn the MG by using 'points', one for each county run, to achieve the 1500 'service points'. The 'transmitted county' total consists of the counties (for which you have logged data) that you have run. You can run the same county on different days, up to 50 times on 50 different days. Thus, if you run Appling, GA on Monday, you get one transmitted county credit, if you log it. If you run it again on Tuesday, you can get another 'transmitted county'. If you run the same route to Grandma's house each year, and make contacts from each county along the way, they all count.

The "RAS" or Ran All State(s) is tracking the total number of different counties you have run. Thus, the 'transmitted county' total is likely to be much higher than this number since it includes repeats of the same county (if you entered the data for different days). For folks working on running all the counties in a state, or in the adjoining states, the Logger program will track each of the new 'transmitted counties' that are unique – you only get credit the first time you run them.

Everyone can be working on building up their transmitted county total from day one, so when you are out mobile, make some contacts! Next time on the same trip, do it again. At some point, you may be interested in working on the MG award, and all those previous contacts will come in handy! It only takes one contact to receive credit, but most county hunters want to put them out for anyone on frequency to have a shot at it. One band, 4 bands, cw, SSB, digital – whatever rocks your boat.

Solid State Batteries

The new development is the work of Planar Energy of Orlando, Florida—a company spun out of America's National Renewable Energy Laboratory in 2007. The firm is about to complete a pilot production line that will print lithium-ion batteries onto sheets of metal or plastic, like printing a newspaper.

“Thin-film” printing methods of this sort are already used to make solar cells and display screens, but no one has yet been able to pull off the trick on anything like an industrial scale with batteries. Most batteries include liquid or semi-liquid electrolytes—so printing them has been thought to be out of the question. Planar, however, has discovered a solid electrolyte it believes is suitable for thin-film printing.

A battery’s electrolyte is the material through which ions (in this case lithium ions) pass from one electrode (the cathode) to another (the anode) inside a battery cell. Electrons prised from those ions make a similar journey, but do so in an external circuit, usually through a wire. That means the energy they carry can be employed for some useful purpose. Push electrons through the wire in the opposite direction and the ions will return to their original home, recharging the battery.

In the case of a lithium-ion battery the electrolyte is usually in the form of a gel. It is possible to make such a battery with a solid electrolyte, but until now that has been done by a process called vacuum deposition. This uses complex and expensive machinery to build up atomic layers of material on a substrate. Batteries made this way tend to be small and costly, suited for specialist devices like sensors. To be any use in consumer electronics, and especially electric cars, solid-state batteries would need to be bigger and capable of being cranked out in greater numbers.

What Planar has come up with is a ceramic electrolyte which it says works as well as a gel. It can print this electrolyte (along with the battery’s electrodes) onto a sheet of metal or plastic that passes from one reel to another in a process similar to that used in a traditional printing press. Nor does it have to be done in a vacuum. Once printed, the reels can be cut up into individual cells and wired together to make battery packs.

The crucial trick is that although both the electrodes and the electrolyte appear solid, they are actually finely structured at the nanometre scale (a nanometre is a billionth of a metre). This is to allow the lithium ions free passage.

Source: The Economist

Delaware QSO Party

There was a Delaware QSO Party, but not a whole lot of activity spotted. Most seemed to be on phone. I saw two spots for it, and worked one station.

from the 3830 contest reflector

KS4X (TN) had 11 phone QSOs, none on cw

Artificial Gasoline

Artificial petrol that costs 19p per litre could be on forecourts in as little as three years.

British scientists are refining the recipe for a hydrogen-based fuel that will run in existing cars and engines at the fraction of the cost of conventional petrol.

With hydrogen at its heart rather than carbon, it will not produce any harmful emissions when burnt, making it better for the environment, as well as easier on the wallet.

The first road tests are due next year and, if all goes well, the cut-price 'petrol' could be on sale in three to five years.

Professor Stephen Bennington, the project's lead scientist, said: 'In some senses, hydrogen is the perfect fuel. It has three times more energy than petrol per unit of weight, and when it burns, it produces nothing but water.

'Our new hydrogen storage materials offer real potential for running cars, planes and other vehicles that currently use hydrocarbons.'

The fuel is expected to cost around $1.50 a gallon, or 19p a litre. Even with fuel taxes, the forecourt price is likely to be around 60p a litre – less than half the current cost.

That would bring the price of filling a 70-litre Ford Mondeo down to around £42.

Energy from hydrogen can be harnessed by burning the gas or combining it with oxygen in a fuel cell to produce electricity.

But current methods of storing hydrogen are expensive and not very safe.

Stephen Volker, of Cellar Energy, which is developing the technology, told Gizmag: 'We have developed micro-beads that can be used in an existing gasoline or petrol vehicle to replace oil-based fuels.

'Early indications are that the micro-beads can be used in existing vehicles without engine modification. The materials are hydrogen-based, and so when used produce no carbon emissions at the point of use, in a similar way to electric vehicles.'

A tankful of the artificial petrol, which has yet to be given a brand name, is expected to last 300 to 400 miles, in line with conventional fuel.

But AA president Edmund King warned: 'The fact the hydrogen is cheaper now doesn't mean it always will be because the Government would soon get its hands on it and increase the tax.'

Liquid Radio Antennas

No, this is not the April 1 issue

America's navy is developing an antenna made of seawater

A BIG American warship bristles with more than 100 large copper antennae that send and receive signals for its weapons, its radar and its voice and data communications. A lot of aerials, then, but still not enough. The navy wants its ships to carry even more of them. Fulfilling that desire has, however, stymied experts for decades. If placed too close together, antennae interfere with each other's signals. They also get in the way of aircraft and weapons. And, crucially, naval antennae—many of them more than 20 metres tall—make warships more easily visible to enemy radar.

At the American navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (known as SPAWAR for short), in San Diego, a team of more than 30 engineers is trying to solve such problems. In 2007 the team's leader, Daniel Tam, thought of a possible answer, appropriately enough, while taking his morning shower. The sodium and chloride ions in salt water conduct electricity. Could a spout of seawater, he mused, replace a metal antenna?

After a trip to a hardware store, Mr Tam discovered that indeed it could. With an $80 water pump, a $15 rubber hose and a $20 electrical device called a current probe that was easily plugged into a hand-held radio, he produced a spout roughly four metres tall from the waters of San Diego Bay. With this he could send and receive a clear signal. Over the intervening years his invention, dubbed the "pee antenna" by incredulous colleagues, has been tweaked and

improved to the point where it can transmit over a distance of more than 50km (30 miles).

To make a seawater antenna, the current probe (an electrical coil roughly the size and shape of a large doughnut) is attached to a radio's antenna jack. When salt water is squirted through the hole in the middle of the probe, signals are transferred to the water stream by electromagnetic induction. The aerial can be adjusted to the frequency of those signals by lengthening or shortening the spout. To fashion antennae for short-wave radio, for example, spouts between 18 and 24 metres high are about right. To increase bandwidth, and thus transmit more data, such as a video, all you need do is thicken the spout. And the system is economical. The probe consumes less electricity than three incandescent desk lamps.

A warship's metal antennae, which often weigh more than 3½ tonnes apiece, can be damaged in storms or combat. Seawater antennae, whose components weigh next to nothing and are easily stowable, could provide handy backups—and, eventually, more than backups. Not all of a ship's antennae are used at once, so the spouts could be adjusted continuously to obtain the types needed at a given moment. According to SPAWAR, ten such antennae could replace 80 copper ones.

Fewer antennae mean fewer things for enemy radar to reflect from. Seawater is in any case less reflective of radar waves than metal. And if a ship needed to be particularly stealthy (which would mean keeping its transmissions to a minimum), her captain could simply switch the water spouts off altogether.

One disadvantage of water spouts is that they can be torn apart by the wind. SPAWAR's researchers have, however, found that their antennae work just as well if encased in a plastic tube. The tube can be sealed at the top so that the water goes up the middle, bounces off the top and then trickles down the inside of the tube's wall to the bottom, where it may be recycled.

That innovation also means that SPAWAR's invention need not be restricted to the navy. The closed-tube design allows saline aerials to be deployed on land, too. Indeed, one has already been tested successfully by a group of marines. It worked, as expected, with brine made from fresh water and a few pinches of salt. But if salt is not to hand, never fear. It also worked fine when the spout was fed with Gatorade.

Source: Economist

On the Road with N4CD

The weather in Dallas had been challenging. We had 4 days of solid ice right before the Super Bowl and the temps did not get above freezing for 100 hours. Some speculate mother nature

was trying to make the two visiting teams feel 'at home' with their cold normal weather.

There were rolling blackouts one day with worries of repeats with the very low single digit temps. If you went out, you went no more than 15 mph on the roads. My plans had to change – I was headed to Houston, but the roads were terrible and Friday morning Houston got an ice storm that shut down all their toll roads. Then it would have been to FL to run most of the state and do some visiting. That was off and I missed the antique radio convention and auction down there in Houston.

So it was on to plan B. The weather warmed up to 40 degrees and much of the ice melted away by Sunday and Monday. Unfortunately another ice storm/snow event was headed to Dallas, so it was time to get out of Dodge....or be stuck for another couple days. I elected to get out of Dallas while I could.

There was just one county in AL and one county in GA that somehow I had managed to drive around during my multiple trips to those states, so it was going to be a long journey just to get those two. I loaded up the car early on Tuesday morning – the roads were in good shape but my driveway still had ice. It took extra care to not slip as the antennas were put on the car. Since it was a weekday, I had to leave real early to miss the rush hour in the Metroplex – 6am on the road to get the first 30 miles done before it backed up with normal traffic and traffic jams. Needless to say, it was dark outside.

It was uneventful headed east on I-20...and more east...and even more east. In LA, you can catch a few more counties with short trips off the interstate, but I was trying to make time. Also, I was trying to get a contact with a MP holder in each county, plus run them on two bands once I got 200 miles from home. The close in ones I had already put out. Shelby AL was the one missed in AL...and I hit that just before stopping for the night at a Super 8 Motel Tuesday night after a long, long day of driving. It's just off the bypass interstate by a mile or two. Dinner at the nearby Cracker Barrel. It got dark early there that far east in the central time zone.

The Super 8's don't have any more directories any longer – I guess you are supposed to plan on line or use your iPhone to find them these days. Finding that one took a few miles of scouting as it was 2 miles north of the interstate. It was fine. $67 including the tax.

The next morning it was back on I-20 to Atlanta, then down the interstate to Treutlen GA. How could I have missed a 'green stamp' county? I did. I had driven all around it on various trips hitting them for one reason or another. I had scoured by logs carefully, but there was not one contact from that county. Treutlen was the lone county in GA not run for 2nd time so we took care of that on this trip. That finished off those two states, and all of the southeast now. I've got about 8 in New England, and close to 300 out in MN and WA, OR, CA, and ID to run again. Oh...and HI and AK – biggies dollar wise. Maybe someday.

Running two bands with 3 or more contacts each worked well till I got to GA..and I ran out of the county before I had time to switch bands. Actually I had stopped on a county line after just running into a 'short county' on the interstate and decided that one band was enough and got

moving again. I didn't want to push my luck. So I missed one for MD transmit credit. That's urban Atlanta and didn't try to get off. Still got the MD contact. Ray, AB4YZ, and Hollis, KC3X, have joined the hunt for Mobile Diamond Counties, each recently having earned the Master Platinum award.

As I was leaving Atlanta, Ray, WA5OPO had called on the cellphone and asks 'Any chance for Toombs, GA, the LC WBOW'? I check the map and it is 10 miles south of the interstate after Treutlen, and I need to head south to get to Orlando, too. That would work out OK. It didn't really matter which way I went down there, but I was trying to fill in some MD counties. That whole part of the state was 'needed'. Joyce, N9STL had run down the interstate in GA, then down the east coast of FL to her winter residence. Ron, KB6UF, had made a trip to Tampa and filled in a lot of the FL panhandle, so I'd head on down through some new ones. Just about everything was new in south GA. Scottie had done a bunch up in the middle part already.

17M was working well for most of the trip, and there was a lot of activity on 17. The further south I went, the better 14 and 17 worked. It's tough when you get far south in TX or FL to do much on 40M in the middle of the day! On the way home, 17M was flakey along with 20M due to solar flares. In the middle of the day, you could get 2-8 contacts on 17M.

Ray, WA5OPO had been working me on 30m cw as I headed toward his LC. That's a smart thing to do so one can tell which bands are working to your QTH. We had success in Toombs.

Toombs, GA (LC WBOW for WA5OPO 5th Time)

A genuine “Percy Pic”

I headed south a bit and stopped at another Super 8 motel in south GA. I checked in and it

was early enough to run Pierce which was 6 miles away. Someone has requested that. Back home about sunset. Dinner at the Ryan's Steak House nearby. In the morning it was south down into FL through Bradford, Nassau, Clay, and others off the interstate. Then, on the interstate for the last 100 miles or so. It was a bit warmer in Orlando, but still a bit chilly. That winter weather reached all the way down there.

I stayed at a Motel 6 for 3 days – about 5 miles from the hamfest. There are large trees with hanging down branches everywhere in FL. When you run big antennas, you need to be paranoid about hitting them (or the other way around) and losing resonators. The Motel 6 required dodging lots of low hanging foliage. If you travel on back roads, you have the same concerns!

The Orlando 'Hamcation' starts at noon on Friday and I arrived early. I yakked with some of the locals until it started at noon, then went into the buildings and flea markets. It's a big one with over 5000 people showing up, and most of the major vendors. The county hunters had a small get together at 1pm. Let's see...who was there...N9STL Joyce, and K9HUH, Ted. W8FNW, Jim, and Damais, W4FNW. Chuck, K9IA and Fran, W9XYL. Paul, NU4C

NU4C Paul

Fran W9XYL and Chuck K9IA

Jim W8FNW and Damais(Dee) W4FNW

Also wandering around the hamfest were W4OV, VE3EXT, and likely another half dozen that never crossed paths with me. Jim, K9JF was down working at the ARRL booth. Luis, XE1L, was there. He's now up to 1500 confirmed toward his USACA.

VE3EXT Jim

Saturday things started at 9am. It was in the 30s with a good wind blowing. The Florida residents were bundled up in blankets in the flea market. Chilly! It warmed up to the 60s by noon so folks defrosted.

I picked up a few small goodies, but didn't find any treasures to buy. No early Knight Kits. Not even much in the way of Heathkits. Quite a few brought out 'boat anchors' and there were a dozen or more Hallicrafters receivers, a pair of Ten Tec “Power Mite” QRP rigs (at way too high a price), some Heathkit Tube stuff, some Globe Scouts, some newer Kenwoods and ICOMs and other rigs, and lots of new stuff from the vendors. If you wanted 2m/440 gear, there were quite a few for sale.

The best 'find' was a year of 1931 QST magazines for $10.

I wore out my feet, back and legs wandering around for most of the day and headed back to the motel in late afternoon.

On Sunday I headed out early as I had 150 miles of repeat counties to get to a new one. The news on Sunday was not good propagation wise – and conditions weren't great for the next two days.

The news was:

SOLAR FLARES!

“Earth 'in the crosshairs' of a solar explosion “

A powerful solar flare, hurled into space when superhot gases erupted on the sun Sunday, might cause a display of the aurora borealis for parts of the northern United States overnight Monday night.

The sun unleashed the solar flare yesterday at about 12:30 p.m. EST from a sunspot region that was barely visible last week. Since then, it has grown in size to more than 62,000 miles across — nearly eight times the width of our Earth.

The flare was categorized by the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center in Colorado as a Class M6.6 and is the strongest solar flare observed in 2011. It could ramp up northern lights displays for skywatchers living in northern latitudes and graced with clear skies.

Such a flare, covering more than 1 billion square miles of the sun's surface (called the photosphere), was described as "moderate" in intensity. Class M flares are stronger than the weakest category (Class C). They are second only to the most intense Class X solar flares, which can cause disruptions to satellites and communications systems and pose a hazard to astronauts in space.

NOAA's Prediction Center has forecast the possibility of additional solar flares from the same sunspot region over the next two or three days.

Sun flares are gas pains

With major flares there is a disruption of radio communications shortly after the eruption. Indeed, Sunday's eruption produced a loud blast of radio waves that was heard in shortwave receivers around the dayside of our planet.

But solar flares also can act as a type of explosion that sends streams of electrons and protons out into space. These electrons, protons and other particles are hurled out of the sun's magnetic field in a wave of electrified gas.

As these electrons and protons come into contact with the Earth's magnetic field and stream toward the magnetic poles, the chance of a collision between these charged energy particles and the rarefied gases of the upper atmosphere increases dramatically, producing a disturbance, or "magnetic storm," in the Earth's magnetic field.

Along with causing additional disruptions to radio communications, a magnetic storm might also prompt a view of the aurora borealis**,** or northern lights, across parts of the northern United States.

But, predicting space weather can be as difficult as predicting the weather on Earth. So there are no guarantees that you'll see anything.

However, Sunday's solar flare occurred near the middle of the sun's disk, meaning that the resultant explosion of electrified particles could be "geoeffective," that is, directed toward the Earth.

So, in essence, our planet was "in the crosshairs" of this solar explosion and would thus increase the chance that an auroral display might result. Ideally, the associated stream of particles could reach the Earth 37 hours after the flare's eruption.

That would correspond Tuesday, Feb. 15, at about 1:30 a.m. EST. But this is only an approximation; the actual commencement of a possible magnetic storm could occur many hours earlier or later, so it would be best to check the sky periodically during the overnight hours to assess if any activity is actually taking place.

The prospective zone of visibility can include the northern Rockies, northern Plains, the Great Lakes, northern portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey as well as all of New York State and New England.

However, if the stream of electrified particles turns out to be less energetic, aurora visibility might be confined to places farther to the north, and nearer to the Canadian border. Conversely, if the particle stream turns out to be stronger than forecast, an aurora might sighted farther south into the central U.S.

Those wanting to try to see any auroral activity should find a dark location with a flat northern horizon and look north. Look for greenish or reddish glows or streamers.
A dark sky also helps. Unfortunately, the moon is currently in a waxing gibbous phase and pretty much will light up the sky until it sets around 4:30 a.m. EST tomorrow. The sky will be darker after the moon sets, making it easier to observe whatever northern lights might be visible.

Source: CNBC News

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That explains why conditions weren't so great on the way home. I left early on Sunday and hit the first 'new' county a few hours later. I took the 3 mile detour off the interstate to get Lafayette. I was going to head across on I-10, but first decided to fill in a few more. I was planning on going to Gilchrest which a few needed...but forgot to take the road and by the time

I realized it, it was 15 miles back. Fortunately someone else was going to be headed there for some LC for the folks. It seemed a bunch of folks needed Jefferson, FL so I ran that one.

Then it was pedal to the metal across the top of FL on I-10 headed toward MS. I stopped at a Super 8 motel in Ocean City, MS right on the interstate. I was tired at that point. The hamfest had wore me out. I'm not used to wandering miles of flea market and being on my feet all day long! The back still was sore and the legs worn out. When the sun went down, I found a motel (Super 8) and stopped. It was Sunday - and likely you know that is pizza night. I went to the Sicily Buffet – excellent! Then back to the motel to soak in the tub for a while. Ahh..nice.

Most Super 8 motels have free wi-fi. If you want it at Motel 6, they'll sell it to you for 3 bucks a night. In some cases at motel 6, you can find a nearby wi-fi site to log into (motel next door), or if you have an iPhone or equivalent or wireless card in your PC with network subscription, you don't have to worry about it. Many Super 8s also have free terminals to use in the lobby if you don't drag along a wi-fi enabled PC.

On Monday, I had two to run in MS- between the various mobiles in MS (KB6UF, N5UZW and N4CD earlier trip) there was only Stone and Pearl River left for the MD award. Ron had run them but I had missed him. It's sort of amazing that the first two states I've finished up for Mobile Diamond are LA and MS. Well, most folks including me still need 2500+, or more, so it will be a long, long time for the first one of the MD awards to be earned.

Just like MG and MP, you can 'run the county' and get credit for it for your own award if you work someone with the required award also. That only applies once you can start to work on the award that way. Specifically, you can work on your MG that way once you have one star and Bingo. You can work on your MP award that way once you have earned MG. For MD, you need to have earned the MP award before you can have any fun working toward MD.

I zipped through LA running the counties off the interstates, then hit I-49 up to Shreveport and then across TX on I-20. Late in the day, I was hungry and needed gas so I made a quick stop for gas and there was a Burger King in the other half of the gas station. I grabbed a Whopper with cheese and got a 32 oz iced tea. It was an uneventful trip home for the next 3 hours. Norm, W3DYA needed Kaufman - it's usually a tough shot. I was running the counties as I headed across, mostly on CW. Norm starting working me in Smith. It's usually difficult from his QTH to Kaufman – but conditions were a bit weird and he was good copy when I got there. I think it was his LC for MG in TX. Good. I made it home by 8 pm, just missing most of rush hour – but there was still an incredible amount of cars on the highways.

I unloaded the car, took the antennas off, and pulled it into the garage waiting for the next trip. The TV provided two hours of American Pickers and Pawn Stars on the history channel before I decided to head to bed. That's when that Whopper decided to attack and I spent the rest of the night running to the bathroom every hour. Dang..... something wasn't right.

Fortunately I recovered late the next day, and got around to logging all the contacts into the MD books and spreadsheet to track those Transmitted MD counties with all the necessary data (3 QSOs each on 2 bands). I suspect a few MRCs will show up in the mail – there are still some working on USA-CA. About the only consistent DX was Andy, SP5SA. Also worked were DL3DXX, DL3IAC, OH3JF and DL6KVA. Conditions weren't great. Alan, VK4AAR, made it on 20M once or twice.

Now, it seems the flux is up over 100. 17M was good at times, and now we are seeing spots on 15M as well. Who knows what this sunspot cycle will do, but most of them also have lots of flares and propagation drop outs – so you get the good with the bad!

Lots of miles and lots of contacts. I was lucky to give out a WBOW to Ray, WA5OPO, and about a half dozen LC's along the way. It was a good but long trip down that way. So many counties – so little time. It was 2500 miles to run those two counties – and I got to visit the Orlando hamfest for the first time ever. Not bad. I also added to the MD transmit log working toward that 500 number and now over 420 done.

Dayton Hamvention

Tim, W8JJ, reports

“2011 Dayton Hamvention County Hunting Forum

I was just notified that our County Hunting Forum space reservation has been confirmed for Friday, May 20 from 4:00PM - 5:00PM. Following the forum, it is customary that we meet for dinner at a local buffet to continue the conversation. Please plan on attending if you are able as it is fun to match a face with those very familiar call signs.

Boy Scouts and Radio

Wow....must be ESP....last month we covered some of the radios of the past that were offered to Cub and Boy Scouts. In early February, the ARRL comes out with the following:

Boy Scouts of America and ARRL Team Up to Help Scouts Learn Communications Skills

02/03/2011

After working together for nearly a century to provide Scouts with the ability to learn radio communication skills, Boy Scouts of America and the ARRL have officially teamed up by signing a memorandum of understanding. This MOU designates the ARRL as a key resource for K2BSA and Radio Merit Badge training at the BSA National Scout Jamboree and establishes the ARRL as the go-to source for Scouts interested in learning about and becoming involved in radio communication.

BSA Chief Scout Executive Bob Mazzuca and ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN, launched the partnership January 31 by holding a unique wireless communications meeting. Mazzuca joined Craigie virtually during an Internet video conference and document-signing ceremony. From separate locations, the pair took the opportunity to talk about the importance of each organization to the ongoing development of the other.

“Throughout the years, going all the way back to the Wireless Merit Badge in 1918, the ARRL has worked hand-in-hand with Boy Scouts of America to help teach Scouts the skills and joys of radio communication,” said Chief Scout Executive Bob Mazzuca. “Today, we are making official a relationship that has been beneficial for both of our organizations for nearly a century.”

BSA, by virtue of its active membership and its outdoor program, represents a significant source of potential new radio operators looking to utilize Amateur Radio for emergency communications while in the field as well as for education, experimentation, and friendship. As part of this strategic alliance, BSA will encourage Scouts and Scouters to become familiar with opportunities for public and community service, learning and personal growth through involvement in Amateur Radio.

“We’re excited by the opportunity to make official a relationship that has existed informally for many years,” said Craigie. “Scouts and Scouters have been some of the strongest proponents and practitioners of radio communication, and we know they will continue to help foster a love and understanding for the essential nature of radio communication for generations to come.” Craigie also noted the numbers of people whose early interests in Amateur Radio led them to electronics and engineering careers in areas that were never foreseen when they were young.

The BSA established the strategic alliance with ARRL because the mission of the ARRL is complementary to the mission and goals of the BSA. Specifically, the ARRL is organized for the establishment of networks to provide communications in the event of disasters or other emergencies, the advancement of the radio art and of the public welfare, the fostering of education, the promotion and conduct of research and development, and the dissemination of

technical, educational and scientific information relating to electronic communication, the representation of radio amateurs in regulatory matters, and the promotion of fraternalism and high standards of conduct among radio amateurs.

In addition to its National Scout Jamboree involvement, ARRL will continue to promote participation in the annual Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) event. ARRL will serve as contributing editor to the Radio Merit Badge publication, will assist with the review, creation and modification of requirements as necessary, and will assist in developing course material, lesson plans, and other resources for teaching the Radio Merit Badge to Scouts. ARRL also will contribute to the content of the Electricity, Electronics, and Emergency Preparedness and Communications merit badge publications.

Source: ARRL Letter 2/3/2011

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Speaking of Boy Scout Radios, an Aurora 'transistorized' Official Boy Scout radio went up for bid on Ebay. Didn't even know there was one of those.

You learn something new every day. I'd love to snag one of these at a decent price. (This one sold for over $120 and parts may have been missing). Probably a 3 transistor superhet radio like the very first inexpensive imports – maybe even a 'reflex' design where one stage was used for both IF amp and first audio amp.

Here's another than showed up on Ebay – unknown number of transistors – maybe only one? Supposedly a 1964 vintage. Unassembled.

Yet Another Greenie Taxpayer Boondoggle

To turn wood chips into ethanol fuel, George W. Bush's Department of Energy in February 2007 announced a $76 million grant to Range Fuels for a cutting-edge refinery. A few months later, the refinery opened in the piney woods of **Treutlen County, Ga**., as the taxpayers of Georgia piled on another $6 million. In 2008, the ethanol plant was the first beneficiary of the Biorefinery Assistance Program, pocketing a loan for $80 million guaranteed by the U.S. taxpayers.

Last month, the refinery closed down, having failed to squeeze even a drop of ethanol out of its pine chips. The Soperton, Ga., ethanol plant is another blemish on ethanol's already tarnished image, but more broadly, it is cautionary tale about the elusive nature of "green jobs" and the folly of the government's efforts at "investing" -- as President Obama puts it -- in new technologies.

Late in the Bush administration, corn-based ethanol started to get a bad rap. Corn for ethanol was crowding out other crops, and food prices were soaring. Mexicans rioted as tortilla prices spiked. So Bush started talking up "advanced biofuels" including "cellulosic ethanol": roughly, ethanol distilled from plants that were not also food products. Bush mentioned wood chips and switchgrass in two consecutive State of the Union addresses

Georgia politicians saw an opportunity here. "The Saudi Arabia of Pine Trees" became an unofficial state motto among Peach State politicians, and Gov. Sonny Perdue declared, "I'm confident the bioenergy industry and sector is going to be a cornerstone of the new Georgia." Amid all this hopeful talk by politicians, there were naysayers among the scientists. One Nobel

Prize-winning physicist talked to the New York Times about these startups trying to turn logging waste into fuel. "You have to look at starts with a grain of salt, especially starts where they say, 'It's around the corner, and by the way, can you pay half the bill?' "

But that same scientist, Steven Chu, is now the secretary of energy, and his Energy Department has recently offered a loan guarantee of as much as $1 billion to a Texas company looking to squeeze fuel out of wood. The Texas company, KiOR, isn't trying to produce ethanol and methanol as Range Fuels is doing in Soperton. KiOR's end product would be synthetic crude oil, which can do everything ethanol can do and much more. This could be part of why the Soperton plant is having trouble finding new investors: Why turn wood chips into white lightning when you can turn them into black gold?

If KiOR's efforts produce a useful fuel, politicians will take credit. But the fact that it has apparently supplanted subsidized wood-to-ethanol makes you wonder what will supplant wood-to-crude before it ever gets to market. More to the point, how much private investment capital has been dragged to useless fuels because of the promise of subsidies? Range Fuels alone attracted more than $100 million in private investment. Without subsidies, that money would have gone to projects whose promise was not taxpayer money but market demand -- that is, somewhere useful. Our "green" subsidies could be postponing the day we get an alternative to foreign oil.

Range Fuels is a politically connected, mostly through its founder, venture capitalist Vinod Khosla. Khosla has given more the $350,000 to federal candidates and campaign committees in recent years, a vast majority going to Democrats. In his home state of California, Khosla has famously and openly bankrolled ballot measures to direct state funding to his own "green" ventures or use regulation to make his investments more valuable.

Range Fuels' lobbying budget is small, having spent only about $50,000 over the past three years. Their lobbyists have been former top staffers for powerful Democratic Sens. Patty Murray, Ron Wyden, and Max Baucus. Despite these Democratic ties, it's been Republicans who have lathered the subsidies on Soperton and celebrated them -- Gov. Perdue, President Bush, Sens. Johnny Isakson and Saxby Chambliss. On the GOP side, Range Fuels' most politically connected asset may be the aptly named Pat Wood. Wood is a revolving-door veteran -- he's the former chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, having won that job on the recommendation of then-Enron Chairman Ken Lay.

Just as Enron sucked up subsidies before collapsing, the wood-to-ethanol project in Georgia is yet another dog in Uncle Sam's "investment" portfolio.

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All those hundreds of millions could have actually gone to create real jobs, employing thousands, but instead went into boondoggles that left investors and taxpayers with nothing for

the hundreds of millions thrown at 'green jobs'.

What's the odds of this story taking place in the one county I had not run for second time GA? Strange, isn't it?

LA QSO Party

This was a good one. Several big time contesters from TX headed there to make it a real deal. It looks like all but 8 parishes made it on the air – the one mobile who was to cover those having rig problems and not making it to them. The weather was good. Here's some of the reports from the participants:

From the 3830 reflector

N6MU

Band mults make it interesting.
15 was open all day which made up for not having 40. Conditions on 20 were really up and down. As usual, the mobiles were awesome! Top for me was KU5B with 38 Qs followed by N5NA(23), NO5W(22) and W3DYA(16). Thanks for all the QSYs to 15, guys. Only worked FOUR fixed stations.

KU5B/m

Thanks again to my dad, W5JSJ, for driving me around. Miraculously we made it through all the planned parishes in just over 10 hours. He never missed a turn and made sure we found a good place to stop in the smaller parishes.

During the drive over to LA we had a rock hit the windshield before we even got to Beaumont, TX and my dad spent a good 30 minutes on the phone with the insurance people trying to find a place to get the chip fixed. Fortunately, we found a place in Lafayette where we stayed Friday evening and by 8:30 Saturday morning it was repaired. I couldn't help but think this could be an omen. Thankfully we really had no major problems.

We got to Lafayette around 5pm on Friday and relaxed a bit until going to Don's Seafood and Steakhouse in downtown Lafayette for some good dining. We spent the rest of the evening watching a bit of TV and getting some sleep. Saturday morning we had breakfast at the hotel and went to the glass repair shop. We got

to the Lafayette-St.Martin line 10 minutes before the start and I finally got CQ/X and the rest of the programs to play happily together with 5 minutes to spare. Chuck, NO5W, called me on 40 soon thereafter and was quite loud. I never heard Chuck the rest of the day.

40 was amazingly quiet the whole day and I could hear N5NA and W3DYA pretty well most of the day. In fact, I had 9 Q's with N5NA and 5 with W3DYA. 20 seemed to be open as usual but didn't seem really stellar. 15 was open to both the East and West coasts for a good part of the day but I really never heard anything in between the two coasts. Most of my 15 Q's are with N6MU and AB7RW with KV8Q calling in when he had prop.

Thanks to everyone for getting on and making this a lot of fun. The continual following really makes for a good time.

The parishes I covered were all pretty small so that made for some quick pileup management and lots of fumbling around trying to switch bands efficiently. Going from Jefferson to St. Tammany parish required going over the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway. The 30-something mile long bridge over salt water made the bands the most quiet they'd ever be the whole day and brought the signals WAY up especially on 40.

I had only a couple of minor problems this time. A bit of RF getting into the WinKey USB on 15m made the keyer throw out garbage every now and then. I lost the ability to key in a couple of parishes which I found out to be because of my foot hitting the cable in just the right way and making it not work. I moved it out of the way during a stop and it never happened again. The last problem was with the Tarheel Controller. The antenna would move but the counter would not change or it would change rapidly. Quick band changes turned into a minute or two of tweaking the antenna. Otherwise, it seems my RF problem on 80 has gone away! I'm glad I never tried SSB because when I got on for the sprint after running Cameron, the only two people I worked (KA9FOX and N5DO) told me I had RF problems in my audio. I'm guessing that's probably a grounding issue which I'll try to resolve by next year.

Here are some of my top callers: KV8Q(48), N6MU(38), NT2A(32), W4SIG and K5WAF(29), K9EN(26), W0GXQ, AB7TW, and N5XG(25), W5ESE and NT5O(20), N4PN and NW6S(19), KC3X and K8QWY(18), N5QLZ(17), K8NYG and K4YT(16), K4AMC, WA2VYA, and K0LG(15), K7TM(13), K2HVN(12), K7INA, W9OP, and N4JT(11), K0PC, N9QS, W2CVW, W4UCZ, and K7ZYV(10).

Also thanks to the DX who followed me around: DL3DXX(16), LY5A(9), G3WPF(5), DL3IAC, SP5SA, and HA8IB(2).

Great job by the other rovers for putting on a great show.

Chuck, NO5W, and I will be running the MSQP in a couple of weeks in his Pathfinder so give us a listen!

NO5W/m

When N5NA sent me a link to his parish coverage map showing that the rovers (N5NA, K5END, KU5B, and W3DYA) that had already signed up had committed to activating all but fifty-eight of the sixty-four parishes I knew I should try and fill in the remaining six. As luck would have it this was possible since the missing ones were all in Southeast Louisiana where I grew up and still have family and therefore free lodging.

So after getting my wife to come out of QSO driver retirement, with the condition that the route be held to under 300 miles (it came in at 288) and that we stop for a casual lunch, which we did (the oyster po-boys and gumbo at the Magnolia Cafe in St Francisville are highly recommended), we were all set. It was a fun trip with great participation from outside the state, much increased over what I remember from previous LAQP trips, but it was not without a few problems -- some might say excuses.

1. Just as we entered Washington parish the computer, which has a virtually dead battery, abruptly shut down when we keyed the radio. And of course this was in the middle of a pileup.

2. After getting it restarted it happened again and we decided to resort to hand-keying and logging. We did about 30 Qs this way but it wasn't pretty. Finally it occurred to me that maybe the auxiliary battery was not able to support the laptop and the radio in transmit mode. So we shifted everything to vehicle supply and we were back in business but not after losing a good half hour.

3. In order to get to Pointe Coupee we had to take a ferry across the Mississippi River at St. Francisville and the timing didn't work out just right costing us another half hour. Entering the ferry a sign said no cell phones so we didn't operate /MM during the crossing, and lost additional time.

Once on the west bank of the Mississippi things returned to normal and we managed to spend time on 40 and 20 in most of the parishes with a frequent QSY to 15 where I would usually get a call from N6MU. Usually I would stay there

and call CQ for several minutes but without any callers. As 15 opens up it would be a good idea for folks to give that band a try.

Even with the problems we managed to cover our advertised parishes with the following results: Tangipahoa(73), St.Tammany(46), Pointe Coupee(40), St.Charles(39), East Feliciana(35), St.John the Baptist(33), Ascension(28), East Baton Rouge(26), Jefferson(26), Iberville(25), West Baton Rouge(25), St.Helena(24), Washington(22), West Feliciana(19), St.James(14), Livingston(12).

Thanks to the following operators for accounting for 50% of our QSOs: N6MU(24) K5WAF(20), NT2A(19), KV8Q(19), K9EN(15), N5XG(14), W8CAG(12), KC3X(12), KO1U(12), W0GXQ(12), AB7RW(12), W4SIG(11), W9OP(10), K8QWY(10), K4YT(10), K4AMC(9), W0ZQ(9), W5ESE(9), WA2VYA(9). Dupes have not been removed from these numbers.

Thanks to the other mobiles in the group who created a considerable amount of excitement for the LAQP and to the Thibodaux ARC for sponsoring the LAQP. Congratulations to KU5B and N5NA for putting up some impressive scores.

As Colin, KU5B, mentioned in his writeup he and I will be teaming up for the MSQP in a couple of weeks with plans to drive the Blues Highway (US61) north out of the Vicksburg area almost to the Tennessee line and then back down I-55 to Jackson. This will, no doubt, be a full-bore effort so Jake and Elwood hope to see you in our MSQP log.

W3DYA/m

Had a fun time in the QSO Party, lots of non-LA activity. The nice weather didn't hurt either.
Even managed to get several new counties for 3rd time.
I had 531 contacts, 52 multipliers, activated 15 counties, and final score of 110,448.
No driver and I operated less than ten out of the twelve hours.
Thanks to all the non-LA gang for hanging around; hope we weren't too boring!
CU from MS in a couple of weeks!

N5NA/M

First time to operate the LA QSO Party. I was able to tie it into a visit with family in S. AR. But it's still 600 miles from WTX to the starting point!

Thanks to everyone who called and followed me around N. LA. And a BIG thanks

to my wife and driver, K5AKS.

This is the first time I've ever been checked out by the local sheriff in a QSO party. We were parked on the side of the road in Jackson Parish and I noticed a sheriff's vehicle had pulled into a store lot down the road. Guess he was running our plates. Then he pulled up along side and asked if everything was OK. My wife told him it was a "ham radio contest". I'm sure he didn't know any more when he left than when he stopped.

The RTTY contest really didn't cause much problem on 40m. I was able to move down the band away from it and then moved to 80m. There was good activity on 80 as well as the whole QSO party.

DX worked included DL3DXX, LY5A, G3WPF, JO7WXN, DL3IAC, HA8IB, OE5KE, and SP5SA. I think JO7WXN is the first JA I've ever worked while out mobile in a QSO party.

Thanks to the following stations for contributing more than half the QSO's:
KV8Q(32), N6MU(23), NT2A(22), K9EN(22), W0GXQ(21), W4SIG(18), K5WAF(17), N5XG(16), W5ESE(16), K8QWY(16), NT5O(15), WA2VYA(14), AB7RW(14), KC3X(14), K7TM(13), N7JPF(13), K4AMC(12), W9OP(11), DL3DXX(11), K0PC(11), NW6S(10), K2HVN(10), N9QS(10), N4PN(10), and W4UCZ(10).

Vehicle: 2000 Chevy C2500 Truck (15 MPG highway. May have to put an HF antenna on my Smart!)
Rig: Elecraft K3
Antenna: High Sierra HS-1500
Laptop: Dell Inspiron 2200
Software: CQ/X de NO5W

73, Alan N5NA

NH QSO Party

There was some activity on phone and digital. Most of the big contesters get on for the New England QSO Party when all the counties likely might be on the air – especially on cw.

KS4X had 5 digital and 14 phone QSOs.

W4UT had 7 digital and 13 phone QSOs.

NM6E (TX) "Just dabbled in this super laid back operation. Miss 7 counties out of the 10 but suspect they were 'rovers/mobile' and/or low power...

I hope I did the scoring right, manual... 2 CW Q's x 2pts for 4pts + 5 SSB Q's x 1pt (5) + the worked a bonus station W1WQM worth another 5 pts =42 pts

By my numbers 4pts CW + 5pts SSB + 5 bonus pts = 14 total points X 3 multipliers (counties) = 42 Pts Total..

I asked a couple of stations is they would do a quick CW QSO but was 'declined' even in the middle of not working stations but calling endless CQ's... Oh well..."

IBM Computer Watson

Wow – did you catch it? The IBM Super Computer playing the two top winning Jeopardy! Champions in a million dollar challenge match?

Way back when during the winning streak by Ken about 4 years ago, who won 74 consecutive games, clobbering every challenger solidly, some IBM folks thought that building a computer that understood natural language, and could decode the cryptic Jeopardy! Type clues and be able to search information databases, tie all of it together to come up with the right answer, and be in the same league as the winning-est folks would be the next 'Grand Challenge'. They convinced their managers to allow them to spend years working on the concept.

The previous challenge had been to build a world class chess computer that wound up beating Grand Master chess players consistently.

It all came to fruition in mid Feb, when 'Watson', the IBM Blue Gene computer with 2880 processors on 90 servers, with 15 terabytes of memory, six million lines of code and internal rules, went on national TV to show its stuff in a million dollar challenge match.

Here's the full hour long PBS video. I don't know how long it will stay on line

http://video.pbs.org/video/1786674622

It's definitely worth a view.

Here are shorter versions of it.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC3IryWr4c8&feature=relmfu

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1c7s7-3fXI

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qO1i7-Qx00k&feature=fvwrel

The challenge of Jeopardy! Clues is that they are cryptic, incomplete and of varied form. You need to know what a 'bat' is from the context. It is a flying mammal or a baseball bat. Or is a verb meaning to hit. Is it baseball or some other sport? The clues were electronically read into Watson – no video or audio clues were allowed – at the same time given to the others – and even the computer had to mechanically 'buzz in' to answer the question.

Bottom line – Watson clobbered the human competition. Who knows what we'll have in our hands in 20 years. The computer on the Starship Enterprise will likely be available from IBM in Stardate 2300.

Mobile Diamond Revisited

Some questions keep getting asked over and over about mobile diamond award . The best resource to answer these questions is in the December 2010 issue of the County Hunter News:

http://www.chnewsonline.com/County%20Hunter%20News%20Dec%202010%20df.pdf

Once you have earned your MP, you can work a MP holder on any band.....for transmit credit, you must work a MP holder, and at least 3 contacts on at least 3 different bands. The MP holder contact can be on any band.

Solar Fireworks!

From ARRL Propagation Bulletin of 2/18/11

A dramatic surge in solar activity is underway, with a level of sunspot numbers and solar flux not seen since 2005-2006. Tuesday's sunspot number of 100 has not been equaled or exceeded since April 6, 2006 when it was 105. On Wednesday the solar flux was 114.1, and the last time it was that high or higher was September 15, 2005 at 119.4.

Average daily sunspot numbers rose this week by more than 25 points to 69.9, and average daily solar flux was up 20 points to 103.5."

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Spots were seen on 15 and 10m in the ARRL DX contest. South American stations were all over on 10M SSB here. There were HI counties spotted on 15 and 10M on the spotting sites.

Most of the rise was due to one sunspot group – but the long awaited return of higher flux numbers may be over. Keep your fingers crossed.

As this sunspot group rotated behind the sun, the flux numbers dropped below 100.

80M CW Stats for Feb

The weather put the damper on mobile operation on Tuesday nights. Storm after storm and ice on the roads kept most home. Here's what was run (from AA8R) on activity nights:

W0GXQ 2/1/2011 CASS MN
K2HVN 2/2/2011 KENT DE
N9JF 2/2/2011 ADAMS IL
N9JF 2/15/2011 ALBERMARLE VA
N9JF 2/15/2011 AUGUSTA VA
N9JF 2/16/2011 SHENANDOAH VA
N9JF 2/16/2011 FREDERICK VA

N9JF 2/16/2011 BERKELEY VA
N9JF 2/16/2011 WASHINGTON WV
N9JF 2/16/2011 FRANKLIN MD
N9JF 2/16/2011 CUMBERLAND PA

Activity nights are usually first and 3rd Tuesdays.

Awards

USA-CA #1212	Jerry, KG8N	Feb 9, 2011
USA-CA #1213	Tom, K8YJ	Feb 12, 2011
USA-CA #1214	Sandra, N0XYL	Feb 17, 2011
Master Platinum #13	Ray, AB4YZ	Feb 6, 2011
Master Platinum #14	Hollis, KC3X	Feb 10, 2011
4th Time #151	Jim, N1BY	Feb 13, 2011
5th Time #100	Ray, WA5OPO	Feb 8, 2011
Mobile to Mobile #15	Jerry, W0GXQ	Feb 8, 2011

Events for County Hunters

End of Feb has NC and MS QSO Parties (2/26) – see last month for details

March 5-6

ARRL Int'l Phone DX Contest
RS and state, province, or power
www.arrl.org/contests
Mar 5, 0000Z - Mar 6, 2400Z

This is not a good weekend to be an SSB county hunter! Opportunities for AK Districts and Hawaiian Counties. Check 15 and 10M.

March 12-13

Idaho QSO Party
March 12 1900Z to 1900Z on March 13
All bands
Look for mobiles in lower part of 40M – 7025-7030
Exchange RS(T) and your SPC. ID stations will give 3 letter county abbrev.

http://www.idahoarrl.info/qsoparty/

March 13-14

Wisconsin QSO Party
WI county or S/P/C
www.warac.org
Mar 13, 1800Z - Mar 14, 0100Z
CW 3.550, 7.050, 14.050; Phone 3.890, 7.230, 14.290, 21.350, 28.400.

March 19

10-10 Mobile QSO Party
Call, name, county & S/P/C, 10-10 number
www.ten-ten.org
Mar 19, 0001Z - Mar 19, 2359Z

Oklahoma QSO Party
RS(T) and OK county or S/P/"DX"
www.okdxa.org
Mar 19, 1300Z - See Web site
Multiple operating periods; CW 3.545, 7.045, 14.045, 21.045, 28.045; Phone 3.860, 7.260, 14.260, 21.360, 28.360.

North Dakota QSO Party
RST and ND county or S/P/C
www.w0cq.com

Mar 19, 1800Z - Mar 20, 1800Z

Virginia QSO Party
Serial and VA county/city or S/P/C
www.qsl.net/sterling
Mar 19, 1800Z - Mar 21, 0100Z
CW 1.805, 50 kHz+ band edge; Phone 1.845,3.86,7.26,14.27,21.37,28.37; 50.130, clg freq 144/220/440.

Other events:

Dayton Hamvention County Hunter Meeting – Friday 4pm
May 20-22
http://www.hamvention.org/

National Convention – July 2011

The 43RD MARAC National Convention
July 6th – July 9th, 2011 Duluth, MN
(
Holiday Inn & Suites, 200 West First St. Duluth, MN 55802
1-800-477-7089 / 1-218-722-1202
Check MARAC.org for latest info