

County Hunter News

March 2018
Volume 14 Issue 3

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

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

The County Hunter News will provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, ham radio or electronics history, general ham radio interest, and provide news of upcoming operating events.

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

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

You can see live spots of county hunter activity at ch.W6RK.com

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

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

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

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

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

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

find information on these awards and the rules at:

http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at:

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

There is a lot more information at www.countyhunter.com . Please check it out.

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

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

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

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

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

Notes from the Editor

1) N4CD Rumblings

February went by in a rush – of course, it's only 28 days long most years. Band conditions have been 'decent' for the bottom of the sunspot cycle with only a few really rotten days when not much seemed to work.

The ARRL Grid Challenge continues – although it looks like a few have run out of enthusiasm, having done it once big time in January and now easing off. Others

continue to push, push, push for more grids. Contacts are contacts.

Parks continue to get run – probably as many park counties a week as mobiles if you can hear and work them.

2) Dayton Hamvention Update

It seems that circumstances have conspired against getting the new building finished for the May event. The Furniture Building will be available for moving exhibits inside. More info to follow. The flea market mud situation is being addressed and the flea market expanded to help the situation.

3) Michigan Mini

If you are reading this and thinking about heading to Traverse City for the MI Mini – one of the biggest get-togethers – now is the time to make your reservations at the hotel. See activities at the end for more details.

4) Garmin County Line Overlay

I picked up a new 'used' Garmin GPS at a ham flea market for \$10 to replace the 15 year old one with obsolete maps. Garmin wanted \$49 to upgrade the maps in it. The new one still took the large SD card so just transferred it over. Unlike the old one, though, the lines are not as heavy and no text for the lines appears with the names. Still, works and has a lot of updated roads in it so the GPS Lady stays happy more often. The motel database is also more accurate. The old one would often have motels that had changed names listed.

On the Road with N4CD I

Winter was still with us at the end of January – snow storms up north – cold weather – but it was time for a road trip. I checked the 'needs' page on K3IMC, looked at the list of not-run parks in OK, checked my own 'needs' for OK for the next time around – and decided on a 5-6 day trip to Northeast Oklahoma. If things worked out, I could catch the last two counties I needed for 10th time in OK, finish running all the State Parks and

National Wildlife Reserves (NWRs) there, and give out a few 'grids' and catch a few, too. The weather would be clear most of the way but bone cold chilling cold at times – at least for TX folks.

Friday Jan 26

So it was off on a Friday morning to get up to the middle part of OK and the Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge in Okmulgee County. Before this event started, I barely noticed the signs for these – if there were even signs. Of course, now I did dig out the information on the location of these sites ahead of time – had a list of instructions and directions printed out, along with the KFF designator, the county, and the grid, to use when transmitting from the park. Naturally, being a county hunter, I ran the counties on the way up to the park – about 4 hours driving time from the QTH in north Texas. The trusty Chevy 2016 Malibu LTD was up to 66,348 miles in the two years of its life so far.

From Wiki:

“The refuge is a narrow ribbon of wetlands, oxbow lakes, swamps, and upland forests along the meandering Deep Fork River. More than 80 percent of the refuge floods annually, thus providing excellent habitat for waterfowl and a wide variety of other animals, including white-tailed deer, bald eagles, and wild turkey. 254 species of birds and 51 species of mammals have been recorded in the refuge. Beavers are so numerous as to be considered pests as are feral hogs. Most of the vegetation in the refuge is bottomland forests of oak, pecan, elm, hickory, ash, sugarberry, walnut, riverbirch, and willow.”



After arriving at 1605z, I set to work – ran on the CH frequencies first – spotting only on K3IMC – and WA3QNT, K7REL, AA4GT, K7SEN showed up on 20m CW. On 30m, W8TZA, K2MF, WA3QNT, W0MU, W0EAR, WY8I, W4SIG and K3BR went in the log. On 40M, I spotted myself on a lower frequency – 7041, and that yielded NF0N, WA3QNT, WY8I, KB9AIT, KN7D, W6LEN, W0ZAP, W5MIG, W8ZST, W4JL, WB5OZA, WA2USA/P in park KFF-1835, N0RZ, KB0BA, W8NWG, VE2WFF. Likely you'll realize most of the last bunch are 'park chasers'. There were no takers on 40m SSB. Then I went back to 30M for the park chasers, then 20CW and wound up on 20M SSB with nearly all park chasers. Only K7SEN showed up on 20M SSB – along with 20 other park chasers. Finished with 63 QSOs there after an hour and 15 minutes. It was time to move on – had a full schedule for the day ahead. I was headed east along I-40 toward the eastern edge of the state.

Next up was a 'repeat' for me, but a needed visit to get the QSO total up to more than 44. On the last visit, I fell 5 short – only had 39. That meant I didn't get WWFF credit for a full activation. I could revisit the park and bring the total up to over 44Q from there for me. This was Lake Eufala State Park in McIntosh County – which is one of the parks on the sides of a large lake system there. It's not far off the interstate or US-69. Like many of the OK State Parks – parts of it were closed for the winter months- parts were open. They don't get too many campers at 20 degrees – and some of the bathroom pipes freeze up – not winterized so the bathrooms in the campground are shut. No sweat. The RV sections and boat launch ramp areas/parking are open and the boat ramps are often the best place to go to run a park as they are large open spaces – and often beyond the end of the power lines that run all over the park to the RV sites and facilities.

I pulled in and ran the bands – on the 'park chaser' frequencies - usually down around 14040 to 14044, 10121-126, and 7040-7046 or so. With no mobiles running these days on SSB, or maybe only one, I could make use of 14336. Might as well be a county hunter there for 10-20 minutes than have rag chewers move in and yak for hours – or worse, someone starting a daily QSO regime there every day talking with their buddy on 'their' frequency now. Wow, conditions weren't super, but 80 QSOs went in the log quickly. That also counted for a full activation in year 2018. On to the next. If I can, I like to make 44 QSOs every visit to a park. I appreciate all the county hunter contacts even if you don't need it. Multiple bands, multiple modes – each is a new 'contact' toward the 44 number.

Off to the next one – Sequoyah NWR – located not far off I-40. Same grid as the others – EM25. In this part of the country, grids are about 70 miles from north to south and 105 miles from east to west. Had a good run from here – with 60Q in the log in

short order.

From Wiki:

“Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1970 to provide habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds and to provide food and cover for resident wildlife. It contains 20,800 acres on the western edge of Robert S. Kerr Reservoir in three Oklahoma Counties: Muskogee, Haskell and Sequoyah. The refuge was named in honor of Sequoyah, a Cherokee who developed an alphabet for the Cherokee language.

The refuge's land includes grasslands, bottom lands, river bluffs, and hardwood forests. The refuge manages a cooperative farming project that raises wheat, corn and soybeans on 3,000 acres. Part of the crops are not harvested each year in order to attract more wildlife. Native animals include bobcat, muskrat, rabbit and deer. Hunting of geese, ducks and small game is allowed in certain areas and seasons.

About half of the refuge is covered by water. This attracts migratory birds such as mallards and snow geese. Fishing, primarily for bass, crappie and catfish, is allowed. The refuge has issued a list of 256 bird species that have been seen more than twice within its borders. Hence, this is a popular venue for bird watchers. “



That was the basic plan for the day – but wait – there's more. Bonus Time! I'm not far from Tenkiller State Park – where I fell 4 short on the last visit not long ago. A big solar flare wiped out the band right after QSO #39. The bands were dead. Not a signal on 20m – end to end. Not a signal on 30M end to end, nor on 40m end to end. Zilch. Nothing. Not even a carrier! I waited a few minutes but it didn't look good. So close

but no cigar! My time was running short then– had to get home and home was 4 hours away. Dang. Well, that day I left with 39Q. Today I hoped to fix that situation and now have a full activation.

It was getting to be late afternoon but had a short window this day to get a few more. Zipped on over the 20 miles to get there late in the day. Still in Sequoyah County – which didn't help – had already given that out – but I was sure I could scrounge up 5 more Qs somehow. Pulled in at 2130z. Caught a few on 20m but it was dying for the day – that's 3:30pm – and 20 is usually long gone this time of year or you just hear the west coast. Caught some on 30 and 40CW. Didn't have time to stick around as sunset comes early in January – and was out of there at 2200z – 4pm. Still had to get to the motel 20+ miles away in Sallisaw, OK. Finished with 25Q. Would have liked to stick around for 44Q today if possible, but using daylight to get to the motel was priority number one. Plus dinner before 'way too dark'.

Stayed at the Days Inn there - \$62. Dinner was at the China Harbor Buffet across the road - \$9.88 plus tip. Good. Filled up the gas tank – 12 gallons at \$2.37/gal. Somehow I had managed to leave home (temp was in 50s) without my warm winter jacket. Hmm.....the forecast was for 20 degree 'high' days. A quick trip to the local Super Walmart – 1 mile away – solved that problem for \$27 plus tax. I probably needed a new coat as the old one is 28 years old now. Hi hi.

Saturday Jan 27

I headed out – ran up into Adair OK for a few miles and put it out for the folks. Then over to Cherokee Landing State Park in Cherokee County – pulled in, ran 40m CW – it was early in the day, followed by 30 and 30m CW. Switched over to 20m SSB at 1610z and a dozen more went in the log including W6TPC, WV1Y, AB7NK, K7SEN and N8II. Lots of park hunters made it in the log. Wound up with over 70Q so I was a happy camper. I'm headed north. Weather very cold - just low 20s.

Next up was Natural Falls State Park KFF 2808 in Delaware County OK. This park is one of a few with admission charge to get in in OK – and it was a weekend and folks were streaming in constantly. It wasn't too far from a major population center of Siloam Springs, AR. Band conditions were decent – lots of park hunters and just 'passer by' folks working the Parks on the Air – so wound up with 99Q. I'm now getting up to the top northeast corner of OK.



From the state site:

“Located near the Oklahoma/Arkansas border in the scenic Ozark Highlands region of northeast Oklahoma, Natural Falls State Park features a 77-foot waterfall cascading through rock formations and creating a hidden, serene atmosphere at the bottom of a narrow V-shaped valley. A railed observation platform allows hikers to overlook the falls and another observation deck with seating is located at the foot of the falls offering two vantage points to enjoy one of the most scenic wonders in the state. The beautiful scenery looks familiar to many visitors because scenes from the 1974 movie, "Where the Red Fern Grows" were filmed in the park.”

Last up for the day was Ozark Plateau NWR – also in Delaware County. Ran 20m SSB first – followed by the CW bands. Success with more than enough Qs to 'activate' the park. Finished with 60Q. Winter Field Day was going on – and that was mostly home stations working each other for grids, I guess. Not that many 'outdoor' or 'indoor' stations not at home QTHs compared to the large number of 'home stations'. I didn't care – I just needed Qs and maybe would catch some new grids in the process.



from Wiki:

“Originally known as the Oklahoma Bat Caves National Wildlife Refuge, Ozark Plateau National Wildlife Refuge was established for the protection of endangered bats and their habitat. The refuge is made up of several parcels of land located in northeastern Oklahoma. These parcels contain numerous caves considered crucial for the bats' survival.

The endangered cave species include the Ozark big-eared bat , gray bat , Indiana bat , and Ozark cavefish ”

Fortunately, there was an inset driveway – with locked gate – where one could park and be on the NWR property. Otherwise, the rest of the facility is 'closed to the public' with a chain link fence blocking access without special permission to get in. Likely only researchers and politicians with connections can get in.

Normally I can run 3 or 4 parks a day and must be in the park long enough to get to 44 plus Qs if at all possible. Some days propagation isn't there no matter how long you stay there, other days you can put 60-70 Qs in the log in under 2 hours. If you're on a trip, you can't afford 3 or 4 hours at one location. I plan for 2 hours.

That night was spent at a Super 8 Motel in Siloam Springs. AR - just over the border on US – 412 into AR. Dinner was at the Cherokee Casino a mile west but in OK with a very nice buffet for \$12 if you can manage to walk past 500 more one arm bandits and other gambling devices. You definitely won't lack for food here – there was the Asian Section, the BBQ section, Mexican section, the Italian Section, the 'Popular' section with

prime rib, chicken, ham, turkey, etc. Giant dessert area. I didn't spend a dime on gambling, but the place was packed on a Saturday night with folks giving away their money by the fist full and bucket full. The parking lot must have held 500 or more cars and few spots were open.

Sunday Jan 28

First up was an ATNO – all time new one – never been on the air – Logan Cave NWR in Benton County AR. I had printed off instructions on how to get here. You probably want to do that for the NWRs – they are not always in the Garmin Nuvi database and even Google Maps sometimes cannot find a route to get there from where you are. This one was in the Garmin – so programmed it in. Also used Google Maps on the tablet – and both headed me in the right direction. Stereo directions – but diverged at the end. It was 22 degrees outside. Brrrr!

However, Google maps routed me to the south side of the NWR – with no access road. Garmin took me to the north side – and there is an access point. Some of the NWRs are fully gated and 'you can't get in without permission'. This one is a 'series of bat caves'. You can usually find an access point – someone at some time has to get in to the NWR. Fortunately, most have an 'inset gate' so that a car can pull off the road, park, and then unlock the gate without the vehicle hanging into the road. That was the case here – it was a good uphill bit, but I could get the car off the road and onto what was park property. Here's a pic of the inset gate – what isn't shown is that it is a 15 deg up angle. Backed up the car into it with some difficulty so I was pointing NE off the front of the car.



It was early in the morning – 1340z, so I started on 40m CW. A few county hunters were in the log including AB4WL, KA9JAC, AD1C, K4YFH. Then ran 20CW and worked a few French stations who were involved in their contest. At 1420z switched over to 40m SSB and the Winter Field Day was still going on. Made a whole bunch of WFD contacts on SSB. Then over to 30 CW where I picked up K7SEN. Not many CH in the log but I guess it was early and not many needed Benton AR. Finished with 85Q.

Now it was back to OK and on to Honey Creek State Park in OK – KFF 2786 in Delaware County. Lots of park chasers went in the log but not many CH – of all the contacts, only KB9AIT, KC3X, K7SEN, NF0N, WQ7A, AB7RW, AB4WI, N0KV, K9FD, KA2LHO, W4IHI were in the log. Finished with 62Q so happy camper once again.

From the state site:

“Located on the shore of Grand Lake is Grove's own Honey Creek Area at Grand Lake State Park. The 38-acre park is open year-round, and contains 49 RV sites, 100 tent sites, an outdoor swimming pool, picnic facilities, a dump station, two shelters and four comfort stations with showers.”



There are several OK state parks on Grand Lake – a huge sprawling lake with lots of fingers in northern OK.



One more today - and it was the 4th for the day. Twin Bridges – KFF-2808 is in Ottawa County OK – also located on Grand Lake. From OK site:

“The Twin Bridges Area at Grand Lake State Park is known for its quiet country atmosphere and excellent fishing for trophy-sized bass, catfish, bluegill and spoonbill. A fishing center with bait, tackle and enclosed fishing dock is located within the park. Lighted boat ramps, picnic areas, 63 RV and

100 tent campgrounds, snacks, lake huts, playgrounds, volleyball court and horseshoe pits are also available. Picnic facilities include tables, individual shelters and group picnic shelters for larger gatherings.”

Ran the bands including 20M SSB which is often good mid day on weekends. During the weekdays, the activity drops by 70% it seems. Finished with 70 and headed on to the motel – a Microtel in Miami, OK. There wasn't time to squeeze one more in so it was a short day. Dinner was at the Dos Amigos Mexican place.

Many of these parks in NE OK had been activated by K0ATZ – out of MO. He's a very active “park putter outer” having run dozens in OK and MO.

Monday Jan 29

First up was Bernice State Park in Delaware County. Seems I'd been stuck in that county for a while now – several runs and several parks. It's another on Grand Lake. Left the park with enough QSOs for a successful activation.



After reaching the top corner of OK, it was now through Craig County to Cherokee County State Park KFF-2776 in Mayes County. Had a good run (grid EM26 still) with the usual park and county hunters. There are very few 'passer by' types working the parks – mostly on weekends and if you sit on 20m for long periods of time. Finished with 67 or so.



From Wiki: “Cherokee State Park is a 43-acre Oklahoma state park located in Mayes County, Oklahoma. It is located near the city of Disney, Oklahoma. Cherokee State Park is located in northeastern Oklahoma on the west shore of Grand Lake o' the Cherokees, one of Oklahoma's largest lakes with over 59,000 acres and 1,300 miles of shoreline. The park consists of several smaller parks that are located near the Pensacola Dam and around the lake. The area is known for great fishing and a variety of water sports. Amenities include picnic sites, a group shelter, campsites, playgrounds, comfort stations, lighted boat ramp and a 9-hole golf course.”

On to the next – not far away

Disney Little Blue State Park KFF-2778 is nearby – a few miles away on the same lake – still Mayes County. 84Q went in the log. If I just run a county, I'm lucky to get 15 or 20Q. Add in the park – and more show up. I'm also there for a longer period and usually can spot myself. When I run a county – well, I'm usually moving and can't spot on the run – and might stop if I can – to spot on one band – and if you are waiting for spots on other bands, you'll lose out. In the parks, with decent internet, I'll spot every frequency move. I also need to get to the magic 44 number so the spots help.

The weather was still chilly – 20s and 30s with a stiff breeze – but sunny. I guess I can manage winter that way – sure beats the snow.

Time for Spavinaw State Park – still in Mayes County – KFF-2805. 62Q went in the log. It's at the bottom end of Grand Lake – below the spillway. Not the best RF location down in a hole, but it 'worked'. I've circled Grand Lake and zipped in and out of different 'bays' or arms of the lake now – all around.

That night was spent at a Days Inn in Pryor OK. Dinner at a Chinese Buffet Place not far away.

January 30 - Tuesday -

OK....I'm getting a bit tired but the end is in sight! More cold winter type weather is coming so I'll make tracks and get on out of northern OKLA pronto. Off to Sequoyah Bay OK – KFF-2802 in Wagoner County, OK. The usual suspects showed up – and some DX since it was early in the day – including park chasers IW2BNA, OH6Z, DF1YQ, DL1EJA, IW2NXI, CU3EJ, DL1EBR, ON7NQ, OK1ES, YO3OW, IK0MHR, S51O on CW and IW2NXI, YL2CQ, F1BLL on 20M SSB. It's tough from the mobile working EU DX but at times it works out. Some of the park activators stick up 'cobweb' antennas or ground plane antennas – full size for 20M. Did 44Q plus –



from the state web site:

“Sequoyah Bay State Park is a paradise for water sports and camping. It is located on the shores of Fort Gibson Lake, offering 19,100 surface acres and 225 miles of shoreline. A variety of water sports are available and camping is plentiful. The park features 71 semi-modern RV sites with water and electric hook-ups, two dump stations and 180 regular tent sites.”

Then it was a good couple hour drive over to Osage Hills State Park in....Osage County OK. You've got to really want to go to this one – off the beaten path and not many visitors in the winter time. Conditions were decent but I had some 'bursty noise' here

that didn't help out – a couple S units that would come on for a while, then disappear.



From the state site: “ Located just west of Bartlesville in the heart of the Osage Nation in northeast Oklahoma, Osage Hills State Park is a prime example of Oklahoma's natural beauty. With lush forests, rocky bluffs and serene waters, the park boasts 1,100 acres of scenery. A visit to Osage Hills State Park in the fall will inspire visitors, as the foliage transforms from green to vivid shades of yellow, orange and red. “

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Had an interesting talk with a park ranger that stopped by – Kyle Thoreson – who it turned out was also extra class holder KB5TSS. We talked about the disappearing OKLA state parks. He noted that 12 of the existing parks were up for the ax of budget cutting this year. Year after year they have been 'spared' at the last minute as funds were found, but the funding is at critical levels. OK does not charge for admission at most of the parks – only a handful have admission charges and that is only a few bucks. In the past, seven have disappeared off the map – either closed down, turned over to different agencies or native tribes, or actually sold. Lake Texoma State Park was sold to a developer – prime territory on the big Lake Texoma. A year after that developer went bankrupt. The marina and campground are still run by the state under court order but who knows what the future holds for that one. The lodge where we had a mini in the 1990s was shut down and torn down.. Oh well. Still on the 'state park' list so it's still 'good'.

From an article on the web: (dated 2017)

OKLAHOMA CITY - With state agencies told to brace for significant funding cuts, the tourism industry in Oklahoma is expecting the worst.

In an email provided to News Channel 4, the director of the the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department told his staff to be prepared should the state be forced to

shoulder yet another decrease in funding.

At risk of becoming victims of the cuts: 16 state parks, one state golf course, 80 full-time employees, the Oklahoma Today magazine and the Miami Travel Information center.

"We're not DPS, we're not mental health, we're not DHS, but we still play an important role in the streets of Oklahoma," said spokeswoman Leslie Blair, "and provide Oklahoma families the chance to get out and enjoy the great outdoors."

Proposed park closings include:

Talimena
Great Plains State Park
Cherokee Landing State Park
Natural Falls State Park
Red Rock Canyon State Park
Great Salt Plains State Park
Lake Eufaula State Park
Lake Wister State Park
Alabaster Caverns State Park
McGee Creek State Park
Foss Lake State Park
Osage Hills State Park
Greenleaf State Park
Lake Texoma State Park
Grand Lake State Park
Grand Cherokee Golf Course
Boiling Springs State Park

The department evaluated which parks have the fewest visitors and bring in the least amount of revenue. “

<http://kfor.com/2017/03/13/half-of-oklahoma-state-parks-could-close-with-budget-cuts/>

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In 2010, the state did shut down 7 existing parks. If you have an old OK map, you'll see them on it – all were transferred to tribal nations, to towns, and one was sold to a developer who promised to keep the marina and RV/campground intact for visitors.

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Well, fortunately I've made it to all of them before they disappear! They could do away with the golf course – don't use them and they aren't in the park system – hi hi – but they probably bring in more bucks than anything else.

After that, it was on to Keystone – in Tulsa County – KFF-2788. Had a good run with the usual park chasers and county hunters.



From the OK web site:

“Keystone State Park is located in northeast Oklahoma, just west of Tulsa, on picturesque Keystone Lake. This state park offers many different activities and accommodation choices for guests. For an action-packed time, load up the family in your own boat, or rent one and cruise off onto the lake for water skiing or fishing. Two ATV/ORV areas are located close by below the dam. Boat ramps within the park provide easy access to the lake. Pier 51 Marina is conveniently located in Keystone State Park, offering boat and equipment rentals as well as fuel, groceries and other boating necessities. They also have a full-service, floating restaurant at the marina when in season.”

It was getting late in the day. I was 5-6 hours away from home so decided to shut it down and headed to a motel in Okemah. I could add in a few more counties tomorrow that way rather than just zip home ASAP. Found a Days Inn there – an older one that was probably a Holiday Inn years ago and maybe a Ho-Jos before that. It worked. The

wind was howling 30-40 mph from the south but it was only 40 degrees and very chilly. Dinner was across the street at Pepinos. Not many choices here. If I didn't want to be in this neck of the woods to catch some counties tomorrow, I would have headed to the big town of Henrietta 20 miles further east. This was near Seminole and others I wanted to run just south west. There were no more new parks to run in OK.

Wednesday Jan 31

I was up early – usual time about 6:30 – had some breakfast – and loaded up the car. It was a Wednesday and there is a CW Open Test (CWT) three times a day on Wednesday – at 1300z (now 7am central)), at 1900z (1pm central) and one late in evening. I usually just make the mid day one, but now I could get on early – and did on 40M half way through the CWT. Put 23Q in log – didn't push it – just 20 minutes – but maybe a few new 40m CW grids - then headed out to the counties to be run for the day. I was headed south – pretty much on route 48 south after a westward jog to get to Seminole. Ran straight south down 48 till the detour – bridge out – hitting Hughes, Pontotoc and Coal. Hughes was my last county next time around in OK....now I could run it for self credit.

As of seven months ago, you can get credit for the Nth time by working someone from the county. You don't have to do it this way - -some still try to work all counties 'from home'. Not having a great home station – I'll take them now anyway that's legal. Hi hi. Not to worry, I still need a couple hundred more on CW for CW VI.

AH...there was still time and I could take a 30 mile detour to get to Marshall County – often needed – and State Park Lake Texoma – before it goes extinct – again. Pulled in and zipped off 44+ in 90 minutes – they decided time to get home. Lake Texoma State Park had been sold to a private entity that promised to develop it, provide great facilities for public use.....and then a year later went bankrupt. The deal is in the courts, but meanwhile, the state is running the campgrounds and marina/beach area. What a mess! The good news is the state isn't going to sell any other state parks to private parties any longer! Lesson learned.

The 1900z session of the CWT came on after I left the park at 1900 (1pm TX time) – make a few contacts while moving along but I only added in 19Q on 20m CW. Hard to tune for search and pounce, drive, and log while zipping along at 70 mph.

Arrived home safe and sound two hours later.

Now to get to the logging. 18 parks run – 15 new ones, 3 repeats,. Loads of counties

given out. Hope you caught me in something you needed!

Book Review of the Month

Traeger – The Pedal Radio Man by Fred McKay 1995

We're off on a 'down under' tale about the Australian Outback and early wireless. Back in the 1920s, the Outback was really isolated from the world. For most of them, an accident that caused injury, that could easily be treated in a city/suburban hospital, instead would often result in death. That probably wasn't much different than the early wild, wild west of the USA as folks settled it.

Australia is a fair sized place. Its land area is four-fifths that of the U. S., and the drive from Sydney to Perth is similar to the New York-Los Angeles run, except with fewer people and more desert. Eighty-five percent of the country's population today lives in urban areas, mostly on the eastern and southern seaboard.

So when radio took off in the early 1920s, it was hailed as the magic bullet for loneliness in the great outback. Radio magazines and newspapers of the time crowed that wireless, as it was usually called, would help catch crooks, save lives, and educate the masses, but mostly that it would bring isolated people together.

It soon became obvious the talk was all hot air. Benevolence disappeared when serious broadcasting began in 1923. If people in the interior could afford a sophisticated 5- or 6-tube outfit, which would pick up an occasional capital city program when conditions allowed, then good luck to them. There was no commercial power and batteries were very expensive to run a tube type radio and didn't last long.

While Aborigines had learned to survive the arid interior, European immigrants found the isolation hard to bear. Giant pastoral ranches of thousands of square miles meant women and children often had no outside human contact for months at a time. Clearly

the situation cried out for more than flakey broadcast reception. These people needed a voice as well as ears.

Today, among the most revered of Australian names stands the Rev. John Flynn, head of the Australian Inland Mission and immortalized on the twenty dollar bill. "Flynn of the Inland" was a visionary fired by the huge difference both airplane and radio could make to outback life. From the early 1920s, Flynn became obsessed with what he called "a mantle of safety" for the isolated and the dispossessed. Writing about Flynn in his book on Traeger, which is used as a reference for this article, Fred McKay said, "He had a 'fire in his belly' about the creation of a scheme of flying doctors to bring medical security to the entire Australian frontier country." His name is still associated with the Flying Doctor Service of the bush.

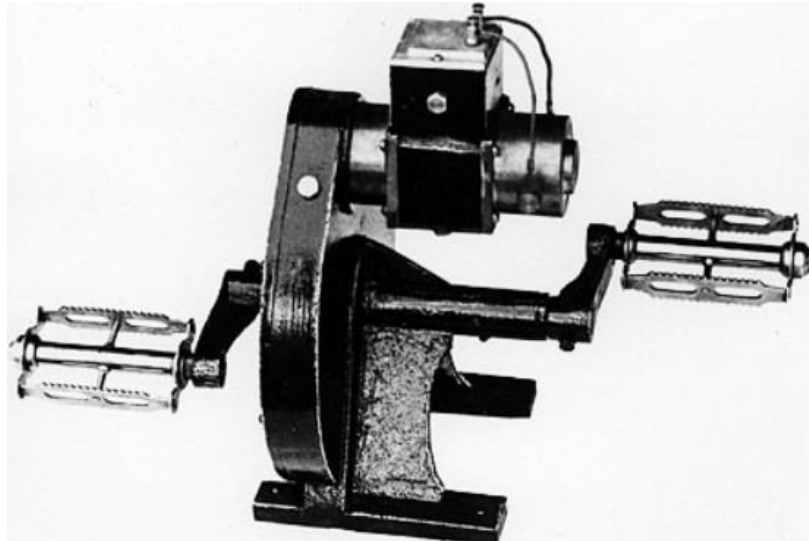
Naturally, the missionaries were the first to make contact with the dozens of tiny native tribes in the land – what were called aborigines. There were also very isolated ranches and farms in the more hospitable locations – and fishing villages along the northern coast. One of the first services offered was the 'flying doctor' service that allowed bush pilots (often the doctors themselves) to make visits to the remote outposts. Of course, there was no electricity or telephone – no communications at all

One of the very wanted things was a method to communicate with the bush outposts – to summon police assistance for the limited crimes or get health information, care information, or summon a doctor for a critical injury or situation.

Along comes a pair of folks – one a visionary wanting to communicate to the outposts – and head of the Flying Doctor service – run through a church foundation - and another a mechanical expert. Now how would you power a small transceiver of the 1926 era? Getting batteries and radios to outposts would be very difficult and the transmitter would quickly drain any B battery – even at 10 or 15 watts. Receivers could be run off batteries but they too would be problematic sourcing them all the time.

Flynn recruited Traeger to build him a pedal generator powered radio.

Enter the “pedal generator” – an ingenious device to provide high voltage for a transmitter using a bicycle pedal system. Mr Traeger had previously demonstrated a 600v generator. What was required for 'portable stations' was something that could provide 10 or 15w of power on transmit – and the pedal HV generator came into being. With a 13 section armature – the generator provided a decent near pure DC output with just a trace of whine on it.



Naturally, you needed a radio – and Traeger proceeded to design radios for both the 'mother station' (which would run off a generator – for hours and hours a day) - and the 10 to 20 to eventually 200 portable units.

The first sets consisted of a 2 tube receiver – a tetrode regen detector followed by a tetrode audio amp – run off two A cells for the filaments (0.15a total) and two 4.5v batteries in series – with the radio taking about 3 ma of current. Naturally you used headphones and the original radios operated on 88 meters (3.4MHz).

The transmitter was a CW one tube power amplifier – filament run off battery and HV provided by the pedal generator.

Well, designing them was one thing – the 'mother station' ran higher power and ran AM. The portables, being power limited, transmitted only Morse Code.

OK – so you have a design for a radio – now to see if anyone in the bush country can learn CW – and can operate the equipment and send messages. Think pedaling away at the generator (about 60 revolutions a minute) and sending Morse Code at the same time. It took a while to get the radio equipment out to the outposts – usually days and days of treks over almost non existent tracks, over rocky fields, through dozens of miles of soft sand – and you were on your own. No one to call, no way to call. You set off on an 'expedition' in your Dodge Buckboard – with many spare parts, new springs, many tires and repair kits, lots of gasoline, food for at least two weeks – and you better know that car inside and out. You'll need 'sand coils' to get you out of being stuck in the sand. So off Traeger went, usually by himself, across the vast barren stretches of the outback –

often 500 mile round trips by himself.

Things progressed slowly, but after 2 years, a dozen outposts were connected. A few years later, another 20 came on line. One of the problems, of course, was the use of Morse Code. So what did Traeger do? He invented a mechanical Morse Keyboard – with a typewriter like keyboard – that would send the code for each letter when pushed. Over the next few years, dozens of these keyboards made it out to the field!

In the mid 1930s, the sets were upgraded to AM – a single modulator tube was added – and the pedal generator improved to provide a bit more power. Now you had a two tube transmitter.

The Flying Doctor service could now be summoned by radio – or a doctor could relay care instructions.

By the late 1930s, Traeger improved the sets with the addition of synchronous vibrators (that don't require rectification) to provide the HV. The sets could run off a large car battery. Additional frequencies at 40M and 188M were added to insure reliable 24 hour capability. But.....most of the mother stations were turned off at night. How would you summon the operator for the station? He came up with a solution – a tin whistle with two holes that would, when one was covered, produce one audio frequency. Cover the other hole, a different one. You'd blow the whistle for 4 seconds on one note, then 6 seconds on the other note. A decoder at the mother station would listen for the two tones sent in sequence – and ring a loud alarm. So you thought that the 'selective call' didn't happen till Motorola and the other folks came out with it in the late 1950s? He was doing it back in the 1930s! Smart guy coming up with simple solutions to problems!

At the outbreak of WW2, over 200 outposts were connected to half a dozen mother stations – all built in the lab of Traeger. The isolated outposts – especially the ones along the coast – monitored Japanese activity providing valuable intelligence during the war.

As technology changed, the radios first went to double sideband – DSB – to save battery power. Traeger himself designed and assembled the radios. By the mid 70s, the officials of Australia decided that only SSB would be used, so once again the equipment was swapped out by Traeger designed sets. Shortly thereafter as the industry became very crowded with multiple vendors, he wound down his radio assembly business and just was involved in the setting up of the stations.

The two-way network became the heartbeat of outback life. In conjunction with the

Flying Doctor Service, it turned Flynn's concept of a mantle of safety into an everyday reality. It made possible the legendary "School of the Air," now an institution for bush children across the country. Best of all, the ever-changing equipment in the corner of living room or kitchen lifted the final, ever-present burden of the bush pioneers -- the blight of loneliness.

However there was one thing about the pedal radio which never changed. Throughout the bush, it came to be called by everyone everywhere, the "Traeger."

He lived to 85 – and made a lot of contributions to the health and welfare of the folks of the outback with his inventions – which were pretty amazing – considering the challenges of remote radio and the technology of the times.

It's not a novel but a biography. Good read – paid a buck for the book at a flea market. It gives you a good appreciation of 'early wireless' and the challenges of operating from the boondocks.

More reading at

<http://samhs.org.au/Virtual%20Museum/hospital-andother-orgs/rfds-wireless/flying-doctor-radio.htm>

N2CX Activation

Recap: N2CX POTA etc., Jan 27

The activations this time around were frankly an effort to ratchet the Q total toward the vaunted 44 goal.



First off was White Clay Creek SP, K/KFF-1743 In DE. The exact site in this large park was the Carpenter Recreation Area. As the name implies features some athletic facilities along with and amphitheater, a number of wooded trails and a very well-utilized disc golf course. Where were those darned Frisbee areas when I was a teen? With temps in the mid-50's the park was quite popular for leisurely strolls. The resident rodent and I even spent some quality time on a park bench weighing the possibility of an out-of-car activation, but the hilltop location was too exposed to the wind for that to be practical in January.

Propagation was predicted to be fair on 40 and poor on 20 and 30. Guess what - 40 was so-so and 20 proved the winner, with bi-coastal success and even a hop to CU3EJ in the Azores. 30 seemed empty though it did reach to the west coast. The lack of activity there may have been since proximity to the start of WFD may have diverted attention from POTA and WWFF-KFF.

Post activation research found another location in the park that may be practical in the future, being remote from the active recreation area.

Next stop was the Marsh Creek SP, K/KFF-1380, up in PA. With the decent weather, the shore of Marsh Creek Lake was busy with people walking their dogs and simply hanging out to enjoy the day. Though the lake was mostly ice-covered, several intrepid kayakers plied the unfrozen areas of the water. Another park visitor walked by the car slowly several times eyeing the antenna. He was surprised that the fishing pole on the

vehicle was actually a ham antenna and that it could be used to talk to someone several thousand miles away. As often happens he walked away shaking his head at what the O.F. was up to....



N2CX Operating Portable – QRP Rig

On the air, 40 was tough sledding with WFD activity and RTTY, though a P2P was made with N4CD at KFF-0488. 30 was reasonable since it was apparently a safe haven from the WFD madness. Fortunately N4CD gave yet another P2P. 20 was quite good since operating up at 14061 avoided the mayhem lower in the band. Alas, the old man got tired too soon and the operation was ended about 4 Q's short of the WWFF goal. Next time we'll try the nearby boat launch area for a change of pace.

Finally we stopped for a birthday dinner for my son Kevin at the Sly Fox Brewpub capping yet another day where nature was the ham shack and, incidentally, and reluctantly (?) forcing down the last of a Scottish Ale...

The Rise of Digital Modes

Club Log author and UK radio amateur Michael Wells, G7VJR, has reported that data compiled from 8,000 Club Log users indicates the proportion of FT-8 usage relative to other modes has risen dramatically since FT8's introduction last year. Every few years, Wells has posted charts depicting mode usage on the amateur bands, based on log data uploaded to Club Log. Graphs he posted last week show the proportion of contacts on each mode for the last 20 years and then for the last 12 months.

“2017 was, of course, the year when digital modes changed forever with the advent of FT8,” said Wells. “It is a remarkable technical achievement, which has breathed life and enthusiasm into DXing for a whole new audience.”

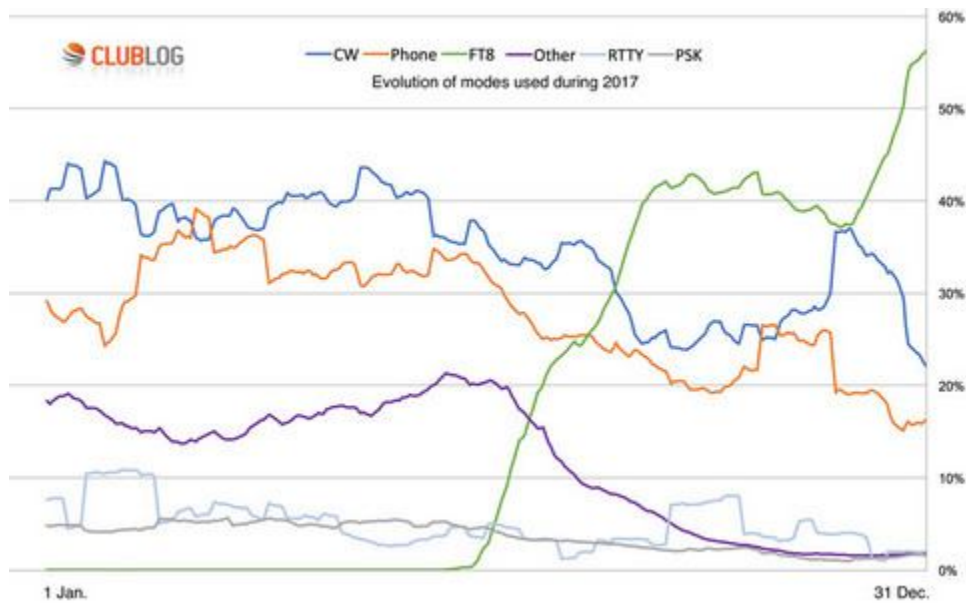
Now out of beta testing, FT8 continues to capture the imagination of the Amateur Radio community, luring away many of those who had been using the popular JT65 “weak-signal” mode. FT8 is included WSJT-X, version 1.8.0-rc3, with several refinements from the original beta release. Among FT8's biggest advantages is a shorter transmit-receive cycle, with contacts four times faster than with JT65 or JT9; an entire FT8 contact can take place in about a minute. Many DXpeditions now routinely include FT8 operation.

The new mode is named after its developers, Steven Franke, K9AN, and Joe Taylor, K1JT. The numeral designates the mode's 8-frequency shift-keying format. Tones are spaced at 6.25 Hz, and an FT8 signal occupies just 50 Hz.

Wells reported that 8,000 Club Log users uploaded FT8 contacts last year, logging 46,000 discrete call signs in that mode. “For reference, in 2017 the total number of QSOs uploaded to Club Log (all modes) was 32 million,” Wells said. “Of that total, the number of QSOs made with FT8 was 4.8 million.” That works out to 15% of all contacts posted to Club Log, which may or may not be representative of Amateur Radio activity at large.

Wells' graph for 2017 shows a dramatic increase in mid-2017 in the percentage of FT8 contact relative to other modes, by year's end overtaking CW and SSB usage, already trending downward except for a significant bump in CW usage toward the end of the year. RTTY and PSK31 usage remained comparatively stable over the course of 2017. The usage of “other” undefined modes declined dramatically after the introduction of

FT8.



FT-8 is the Green Line

Wells explained it this way. “On any given day [the graph shows] the percentage of QSOs logged with a particular mode, plotted for a year,” he told ARRL. “Say 100 QSOs were made on Wednesday, then, 55 of them were on FT8. It is not showing absolute levels of activity, just relative levels of activity.”

Wells pointed out that the data is smoothed, and the values are for a 28-day moving average. “Therefore, a weekend of only CW and no FT8 has little effect — the trend is gradually adjusted by ongoing activity, and not by shocks.”

Last fall, Taylor expressed some surprise about the “rapid uptake” in the use of FT8 on HF. Rather than viewing FT8 as a game-changer, however, Taylor told ARRL that he sees a dividing line between such digital modes and more traditional modes. As he sees it, SSB and CW are “general-purpose modes,” suitable for ragchewing, DXing, contesting, emergency communications, or whatever.

“FT8 and the other modes in WSJT-X are special-purpose modes,” Taylor said. “They are designed for making reliable, error-free contacts using very weak signals — in particular, signals that may be too weak for the more traditional modes to be usable, or even too weak to hear.”

Taylor pointed out that the level of information exchanged in most FT8 — and other similar digital modes — isn't much more than the bare minimum for a valid contact. In addition to call signs and signal reports, stations may exchange grid squares and acknowledgments.

AI5P Activation

AI5P:” K-4550 Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks Nat Monument. Tough conditions again but 49 folks in the log. That cave estimated 900 yrs old, dug with sticks and stones..soot marks still on ceiling..amazing “

from Wiki: “The Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument is a remarkable outdoor laboratory, offering an opportunity to observe, study, and experience the geologic processes that shape natural landscapes. The National Monument, on the Pajarito Plateau in north-central New Mexico, includes a national recreation trail and ranges from 5,570 feet to 6,760 feet above sea level. It is for foot travel only, and contains two segments that provide opportunities for hiking, bird watching, geologic observation, and plant identification.

The cone-shaped tent rock formations are the products of volcanic eruptions that occurred 6 to 7 million years ago and left pumice, ash, and tuff deposits over 1,000 feet thick. Tremendous explosions from the Jemez volcanic field spewed pyroclasts (rock fragments), while searing hot gases blasted down slopes in an incandescent avalanche called a pyroclastic flow.

Precariously perched on many of the tapering hoodoos are boulder caps that protect the softer pumice and tuff below. Some tents have lost their hard, resistant caprocks, and are disintegrating. While fairly uniform in shape, the tent rock formations vary in height from a few feet up to 90 feet.”



Rick AI5P

Note de N4CD : This is only a "POTA" park - a "K-xxx" park and not in the WFFF system. The POTA database is still in the beta test phase. Most of the park hunters are sticking with the existing KFF designated parks and receiving credit on the WFFF database.

Remote Station Operation for CH

From the K3IMC Forum Page:

W0MU: " It would be pretty cool to get a pool of remote stations around the US. Are there any no so active folks out there with decent stations that might be interested in allow folks to use them? You do have to have a decent internet service. If you might be interested shoot me an email and we can discuss particulars."

K0MAF: " How timely! I am considering using a remote. I live 1/2 year in FL condo. I use a Screwdriver mounted horizontally. It is very noisy and very difficult to use SSB. On top of that my screwdriver stopped working stuck on 40m. As far as I am concerned, using a remote is like working as a portable. That is allowed. For those who object, that is just fine. You can set up your own personal rules. My current challenge is to work for USA-CA and to follow their (CQ) rules. I don't believe their rules prohibit it. Besides it will increase the odds in working my needed counties that are otherwise impossible due to propagation."

W4SIG: "I am remote, unless I am mobile. Antennas are not allowed where I live, I wish they were. Like many folks these days, if you can't use a remote setup then adios to ham radio. No one using remote would ever prefer it over a home antenna, but they have no choice. While I really appreciate everyone's opinion, let's remember that county hunting awards are "personal" awards. There is no competition here, only folks chasing awards and helping others to chase awards. Remote operation wasn't available in the past, but neither were solid state radios and we all use them now. If someone wants to work all counties QRP or without relays then great! If someone wants to work them all on one mode, one band, or left footed then good for them. If you want to work them all without using a remote station then great as well. It's all about accomplishing something that is a challenge. I think we all celebrate when any of our fellow county enthusiasts accomplish any award in any way they see fit. I hope that folks that don't approve of remote operation will remember the folks who have given them many many counties while they were mobile, yet have no option when sitting at home but to run a remote."

K2MF: " I already mentioned that I do not personally operate remote, however I cherish each contact I have ever been able to make when I have been HF-active and am very lucky to have been able to operate HF from at least 2 very different geographical

locations as well as mobile and occasionally portable. I don't think of myself as having cheated on contact totals or on any awards.

I also don't feel cheated by those who take advantage of remote operation, either. Perhaps I am the exception, but I do not personally view county hunting as being a hard competition between county hunters. Rather I view it as a collaboration of activity between county hunters who keep the activity going by being able to make contacts under circumstances in which they might not have otherwise been able to had not remote station operation been available.

From my perspective, it is the activity that I consider to be the most important thing and I was not able to contribute to that activity when I was effectively off the air for over half of the total number of years I have been licensed. Living in a location where you are unable to install any HF antennas is not fun and can be downright depressing. And having been an apartment dweller for 41 of my 64 licensed years has also not made HF operation very easy either. Perhaps if I had had remote station tools back then, I might have very easily enjoyed using them too.

I think the primary objection by those who disagree with the use of remote stations applies to hams who have HF antennas at home, but during times of lower solar activity and bad conditions, possibly utilize remote connections to different geographical areas in order to make contacts they would not otherwise have been able to make. Here is a possible scenario:

You live on the east coast and for the past year, you have been trying to complete that 40m contact with the 2nd Judicial District in AK but conditions just won't let you do it from your own HF antenna. So you log into a remote station in California and miraculously you have made your contact. Now I didn't do that by the way, but while I don't particularly have a problem with somebody else doing that either, I believe that I can understand why some others do and I think that's the reason this discussion is happening."

K5KDG: "Boy, after reading all these posts I am amazed at the many different outlooks on remote operation !!! Didn't know people (W4SIG) had no home antennas etc. So here is my take and part of this.....As soon as possible I will have my antennas on truck, rig in and God willing will be running counties for ANYONE that rings my bell !!! However you want to collect them is fine with me. I enjoy this hobby and have since about 1967 and now my main interest is MOBILE. So keep them bugs, hand keys or cow bells etc ready, cuz here I come."

W3DYA: " I only recall working two remote stations when I've been mobile. WA2MUA in NY told me he couldn't operate a mobile at his home, but I had many QSOs with him and it seemed to be the same as any other fixed location (the transmitter location, not his home, of course!)

Donna, AG6V, has been operating remotely for at least several years, and I have worked her many times when I was mobile. Without looking at my log (very boring), she might have been transmitting in Oregon or New York. Didn't matter, I knew her transmitter location. It was a pleasure meeting Donna in Colorado Springs - she hopes to be operating from home eventually - either method is fine with me!

Now, will someone please post a note that can explain why such operations should not be counted like any other QSO?

As far as trying to organize this type of operation, it hardly seems worth the effort. But to each his own!"

WA4UNS:" As a mobile... it's NOT up to ME to determine who is using a remote operation. I'm hopeful that I work enough contacts that would preclude having to use a "remote" contact for one of MY awards. It's on the "remote" station to discern if a remote operation contact will be used for HIS award. I don't see why this subject is getting overblown. Everything above USA-CA (as issued by CQ Magazine) IS on the HONOR system lest MARAC begin requiring QSL confirmations (we're well past that).

KA2LHO:" I know of some ops who use remotes and I have no problem with them contacting me on a run. I do ask that they provide me via email with the county of the remote and confirm it when I send an MRC since I am still working toward 1st time (30+ years and counting).

N4RS:"I will be going mobile in the near future. I'm going to have a list of the folks I know use remote. Don't call me as I will not answer you. If MARAC is going to sanction this I will discontinue county hunting or any other operation using remote. It is flat out wrong and won't have anything to do with it!!!"

KM6HB noted from MARAC rules, page 10 : "Portable and Remote Operation - Operation from a non-mobile, temporary fixed location. This includes battery-powered operation that is not in a vehicle. Remote operation (remote control of a distant station, including use of the internet to communicate with the remote station, or other indirect operation) is allowed for MARAC awards.

W0EAR: " As many of you know, I am one of the "terrible people" who are operating remote. I access my station at my cabin in NW Wisconsin from my house in the Twin Cities. Several months ago with S9 plus noise here at my shack in Minnesota, there was no point in trying to continue to operate from my city location. My city house has many deed restrictions anyway, so it never was a good option in the first place. I do go up to the lake once in a while to work contests but otherwise, any county hunting or hamming I do is originating from Burnett County. Wisconsin via remote. Due to health reasons(I need major back surgery), I rarely get to go on car trips outside of going to the cabin. My wife and I have other health issues, just like most of you, so I am not asking for sympathy, just understanding as to what my life situation is.

Apparently, some of you think I am not a person of integrity by using remote radio. In my mind, I am not getting any younger and it allows me to stay connected with the hobby I love and I have been active since 1965. The years I spent as MARAC President and board member were easily the finest years of my ham radio life, What great times we had and there were so many friends I enjoyed working on the air and seeing at our conventions. It saddens me that so many of those friends are now SK. Many of you already know about my remote ham radio activity and some of you are just learning now. If you don't want to work me and think I am some kind of cheater by doing this, please let me know, and I will not make the mistake of working you again. I am not an award chaser anymore, right now it seems unlikely that I will add to my county hunter award collection again, but if that is the case, I am OK with that. For the rest of my dear Ham Radio friends, I look forward to continuing my contacts and conversations with you. I know that there are many hams and county hunters who find themselves without access to a full time home shack anymore and I am so glad that there is an option for us to do so. I mostly just listen now and it fills me with joy to be able do so. Lastly if you dont want to work me anymore or want to chew me out for using remote radio, I would prefer you email me at d6rep@live.com instead of by doing so on this forum. 73 and remember each day is a blessing..."

Digital Modes Mobile I

One of the problems of going mobile and operating FT-8 and other super low noise modes like WJTX is that it takes very accurate timing to work. FT-8 requires your computer to be synced within a second to work correctly – otherwise the timing sequences are off, no one will decode your transmissions, etc.

Fortunately, there are alternatives. If you are lucky, you might have internet access which would allow your PC to time sync off the internet.

However, if you don't there are other means to time sync your PC.

Here is one:

Following Bas' (PE4BAS) recommendation, I obtained a USB GPS receiver to sync time for portable digital operations when cell data service is unavailable.

I purchased this device for \$13.96:

The Amazon listing is:

[Diy Mall Vx-172 vx 172 Gmouse G-mouse Usb Gps Dongle Glonass Ublox Support Windows 10/8/7/vista/XP Raspberry PI B+ 3 Vehicle Aviation Tracker](#)

It was primed into my hands in the usual two days. Following Bas' recommendation I downloaded and installed a Windows GPS time sync application by [IZ2BKT called BktTimeSync](#).

The laptop I'm using it with is running Windows Xp/SP3. I plugged in the GPS receiver and within a couple of minutes the LED in it began to flash green indicating that it was receiving GPS signals. I started the BktTimeSync app, set the serial port to COM8 (which is where my laptop assigned the GPS receiver) and the software found the GPS and updated the clock on the PC. I had intentionally set the time on the PC back a few minutes to verify that the application worked properly. It also found my location, as indicated by the coordinates:

The BktTimeSync application continued to receive updates and update the clock but it became non-responsive to inputs from the UI and the only way I could close the application was to terminate the process tree in the Windows Task Manager. I did a bunch of testing with it (starting without the GPS plugged in, not syncing on startup, syncing on startup but manually syncing as opposed to automatic, etc.) Without fail it would receive updates and update the clock but then sit at about 50% CPU utilization and not respond to the UI.

Iz2BKT has a forum for questions and I found an old thread with a person asking questions about the same GPS receiver that I was using. I added some information to the thread and Iz2BKT promptly replied. His response was that there appears to be a problem with the serial comms with the GPS. Given that there are a fair number of variables at play here not the least of which include the variance in implementation of serial comms with a multitude of devices and an old OS I was just happy that it worked at all. There don't appear to be a plethora of Windows applications available to simply read a USB GPS receiver and update the system clock.

The BktTimeSync doesn't need to run all the time. For my needs one sync is enough as I doubt my PC clock drifts at all in the time that I may operate. This is a good solution for my time sync needs when operating portable digital and thanks to Bas for suggesting it

- - -

Here is another way of time synching – which seems to be a bit easier – it's in the second half of the video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KE_Yx7G5Vw&feature=youtu.be

National Convention Info

Mark your calendars for October 3 - 6, 2018 and plan on attending the 50th National Convention to be held at the Holiday Inn Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, MO.

One East 45th St. Kansas City, MO. 64111 816-753-7400

Book your room online at:

<http://ihotelsgroup.com/redirect?path=rates&brandCode=HI&GPC=MAR&hotelCode=MKCOE&PMID=99801505>

or call the hotel directly and use code MAR

Rooms are \$119.00 per night (1 king or 2 queen beds) plus tax.

More details to follow on the MARAC website and next month's Road Runner.

See you in October!

Ed - K8ZZ Chairman

Minnesota QSO Party

N0L (N0IJ Operator) mobile - 739 CW 14 SSB

"A fun day in very snowy MN with the temp at or below zero all day! Any hope I had of going for 3 straight was dashed early on due to difficult conditions on 40, 20 didn't open for us in the northern counties until about 10, and the cold caused my screwdriver to over heat going to 80, so abandoned it early on except for the two first counties. In the afternoon it warmed enough that we could go down easier and found great results there the last 3 hours. The 1x1 calls were a lot of fun, but the vastly increased activity made it difficult for the weak mobiles to find CQ spots. I never was able to just go back to where I was (when qsy'ing down to 40 from 20) and expect to take right off.

Great bunch of ops following us around and had 17 stations in the log 10 or more times, led by N2CU--28, K1RO AND WX4MT--19, K0AP--18, WA3HAE--17, WB2ABD AND NU0Q--15, W7GKF--14, AD8J, N8II, AND NW0M--13, W9OA--12, W2RR, OM2VL AND W1GL--11, and W8TM, K9NW, AND WF5X--10. How about OM2VL? 5/20, 5/40, and 1/80--all to a mobile in far Northern Minnesota!--amazing.

Besides these, there were 16 more stations that had 7 or more Q's in the log. Thanks a lot to all of you folks! I'm very fortunate to have W0TVD as my good friend and fantastic driver. It was hard not to go back to Cook county, for the first time, but a committed group operated a multi op from there, and eliminating that extra 110

miles sure made the trip a lot easier. Thanks,

John, N0IJ (N0L)

K0F mobile (N0BUI, KI0F opr) 126 CW 18 CW '

had no soapbox comments

K0T (K0TI, KC0RVA ops) 307 CW 293 SSB

With the 1x1 calls this year I asked my son if he want to multi op. We were able to keep on pace with what I did 2 years ago. With 40 being useless for MN mobiles for the most part we didn't work as many MN counties, but were able to do well otherwise.

Even had a 30 minute down period to resolve some RFI problems on 80 phone. Still more work to do there.

Thanks to everyone for all the Q's.

Dan K0TI

N0S - "K0XQ, and I ran mobile as N0S for the majority of the contest. With some time remaining, we disassembled the mobile station and configured a multi-2 for the remaining time. A lot of fun as the rate meter was hitting 215-300/hour. Finished the evening with a nice dinner and some cold brews.

Mark WA0MHJ"

KE0TT - rover - 7 counties - 234 CW

"3/10 running all 10 - 12 watts. Rover antenna was a 66' inverted vee with the apex at 20' high, fed with 300 ohm foam TV balanced line and a Johnson Matchbox tuner. Enjoyed hamming for the day out on the road. WX held for good driving conditions, but the bands, not so much. 40M was in good shape all day, 80M early and

late in the day, and 20M was disappointing. Didn't hear a peep on 15 or 10M. Had some high QSO rates for this op, and was fun. Thanks, everyone ! (2) Q's with OM2VL Laci were a treat for such a low antenna on this end. Thanks for the multiple Q's from n2cu (8), k0ap (6), k1ro (6), nw0m (6), wx4mt (5), n8ii (5), and many others with 2 to 4 each. Thanks for the fun, and C U next time. 73, Dan ke0tt"

K1RO - fixed NH - 194CW/RTTY/DIg 101 SSB - 80 counties

"Fun contest, I really like the one day format. I think I worked 59 different 1x1 call signs. They are all so similar that I had a little trouble keeping track of which were mobiles that I needed to check on periodically. As usual, I'm a little too far away for 40 meters during the middle of the day, but 20 meters was productive nearly the whole time. I almost quit around 19 or 20Z when the Minnesota stations suddenly faded away on 20, but after an hour or so the band came back but with lots of QSB. 80 meters was tough for me except for the last 30 minutes.

I went to FT8 for a while but spent too much time and came back to CW to find that I had missed a couple of mobile counties. I put FT8 aside, and by the time I came back, everyone must have worked their 10 stations...no MN stations to work each time I checked. I only worked 7 stations on FT8, so that was a bust for me.

Great job by the mobiles. I think I worked 11 different mobiles in 5 or more counties, led by N0H (27), K0M (20), N0L (18) and N0S (14)."

OM2VL - 149 CW 49 SSB 76 counties worked

"My 9th MN QP and my best result! Thanks a lot for organizing that nice weekend! Fortunately 20m was open so long and 40m open so early and 80m was excellent. My score would be higher, but some stations was only on 40m at the beginning when my only usable band was 20m. I heard 4-5 another multipliers but when I called him on 20m it seems he went on 40m ...

20m closed at 20:46Z last worked station was Rich N0H and I went to 40m where was lot of stations. Some stations I must call long time because I had RTTY QRM, because of this I can't run SSB. Several time I checked also 20m but band was dead. I was shocked at 22:43Z when I back on Rich ferq 14252 and heard him with

excellent signal. I made QSO also with K0L at 22:48Z and he told me that his next county will be about 5 minutes. I stayed on his freq but unfortunately condx dropped down and I don't heard any station till end of the party.

I got back on 40m and continued here. CW segment was still full of MN stations and must search also mobiles for possible new multiplier I decided no RUN on SSB. Last hour I went on 80m (only 3 QSO during last hour on 40m) and I heard many MN stations. Some stations I must call longer so I don't go back on 40m, stay on 80m and made amazing 21 QSO!!! Maybe I made mistake to not went 160m because after the MN QSO QP I had excellent USA pileup here. During 3 hours I made 130 US QSO including some West Coast ... who know? maybe I can made somebody also on 160m but maybe missed more stations on 80m ...

Most QSOs with mobiles: N0H 20/20 (QSO/CTY), K0M 13/13, N0E 11/11, N0L 11/11, N0S 11/10, W0O 9/8, N0R 7/7, K0H 5/5, W9FZ 4/4, KE0TT 2/2

RESIDENT: 4 QSO: K0A, K0B, K0K - 3 QSO: K0D, N0Q, N0V, N0W, W0K, W0W

I worked 52 different 1x1 stations / totally 166 1x1 QSO!

I spell 30 words from 31 ... Unfortunately I can't spell UFFDA because I worked only K0F on 40m and missed another F. It seems it was impossible mission for me because K0F was only on 40m, N0F was only under 7200 where I can't transmit and W0F I never heard :(

Thanks a lot for FB QSOs for excellent job of mobiles and for organizing this nice event!

I send my QSL for all worked stations, PLEASE also yours for my US COUNTY Award and County Challenge Toplist - need every county on every band + mode!

My rig:

FT5000DX + OMPower Amp

80m: 2el Yagi 50m up

40m: 3/3 stacked full size YAGI 46/24m up

20m: 6/6/6 stacked YAGI 38/25/13m up

73, Laci OM2VL"

WB2ABD - 158 CW - 10 SSB 73 counties

Still recovering from operation. Haven't had this much fun in years ... felt good!
Thanks to all the mobiles for the action

N2CU - fixed - NY - 269 CW 55 SSB 83 counties

Conditions were up and down. Mostly down. Good job by the mobiles as usual. Many times they were louder than fixed stations. Don't have any idea how many 1x1 callsigns I worked but there were lots of them on.

73, Tom N2CU

W0K (W6NF opr) -264 CW 17 SSB

Score does not include 500 bonus points for ten FT8 QSOs.

That was really fun. Heard no signals at all on 10/15 and 20 was very poor. 40 was very good and 80 was outstanding. 80 was good enough that I never got to 160 save for a quick listen and one QSO. I had 129 more Qs than last year and 8 more mults with a claimed score that is more than doubled this year. I did little S&P, which is unusual. Running on 20 was a struggle but I was surprised I could run on 80 late in the afternoon which made up for 20's poor showing.

My XYL and I had planned a multi-op effort but phone was so poor on all bands but we abandoned that idea quickly. I had to bail on 40 early with considerable XE RTTY activity from 7040 to 7055. Between that activity and the FOC operation many usually reliable calls were missing but there were plenty of other stations to work in their stead.

It was fun hearing all the 1x1 calls. I did manage to work 31 of the available 74 1x1 calls. Apologies to N0E for not being around when he came through Kittson County but at least I worked him for two mults later.

The truly amazing thing was being called by OM2VL at 2023Z on 40 and at 2341Z on 80! Laci must have a **very** good station.

Thanks for all the fish....uh, Qs. :>)

K0B (AA0EE) opr 212 CW 64 SSB

K0B, "Korn" in LE Sueur County

100 W, dipoles at 7-10 m, all CW keyed on a Vibroplex bug.
11 additional FT8 QSOs (1 on 15 m, 10 on 20 m).

I was lucky and Murphy stayed away this weekend. The only minor problem was that I still haven't bothered to get or build an adapter that will connect my footswitch (1/4") to my rig (RCA), so I had to use a hand switch (RCA cable to a spare CW key).

Very little action was heard on 15 or 10 meters. Much of the day 20 m CW was useful, but it was very hard to find an open spot on SSB. QSB was a bit of an issue, but generally stations were in long enough to finish the exchange and repeats on my uncommon name.

After starting the contest on 80 meters to work west, I moved up to 20 meters. OM2VL found me very quickly, as did four other EU stations. It was a thrill to be running Europe on 20 m with 100 W and dipoles!

Before I went down again to 80 meters, I heard few MN stations, and even fewer of the MN stations heard me back. However, there were lots of non-MN stations to work, and OM2VL gets special mention for having great signals on 20 (both SSB and CW), 40, and 80 meters. A couple hours after the contest I heard him on 160 m, a true 579, but my 160 m antenna couldn't direct enough power at low elevations to allow him to hear me.

I did pretty well for states (missed 9 plus DC), and managed five Canadian provinces and nine additional DXCC. Counties weren't a focus, but my math puts me at 30, including Le Sueur and Nicollet.

Compared to last year, mults are up by 1, QSOs are up by 5 on CW and 17 on SSB, yielding an increase in total score of about 5k. I think the biggest difference came from my effort on 80 SSB, where I picked up a lot of counties and a decent SSB rate that had been lacking on the other bands.

The 1x1 callsigns were a great addition to this contest. It's a little harder to tell who the op is, but it sounds distinctive on the air when there are so many of them. Maybe I'll do special event callsigns when I do non-MN QSO parties. Yes this one was longer in CW than my normal call, but it was fun to lean on the dot paddle a bit.

Thanks for all the QSOs!
~Bill, AE0EE

KN4Y - fixed - FL - 95 CW - 45 counties

K0M (K0PC) mobile - 772 CW qso

A bit of a wild ride this year because of the weather. It snowed most of the day and roads were icy. Thankfully, all the mobiles came through without problems.

Band conditions were not good for most of the day and I think the scores reflect that. I didn't crack the 100 QSOs/hr level until the last two hours of the contest when 80M came into play. Here are some numbers.

Planned on hitting 22 counties but missed the last one (MCL) due to slow going on snowy roads.

227 unique calls in the log
772 QSOs in the ten hour contest

N0R (NR0T) mobile 526 CW 1 SSB

My only SSB QSO was with N0H (N0HJZ) when we were both in Pipestone (PIP) county.

I could never get sustained runs on 20, hence the low number of QSOs. We took an hour off in the mid-afternoon (in Watanwan county) plus a couple of short bathroom/gas breaks before that.

The average rate over the almost 9 hours of operation was 1 QSO per minute.

Taty did 100% of the driving this year. We decided to modify our route for the last two hours to stay on major roads because the visibility was quite poor for a while. We didn't know how bad it might get and decided the minor roads we had selected for the end of the route probably weren't a good idea given the conditions.

With the revised route, we operated from 17 counties. We took Hwy 169 from Mankato to the Twin Cities (the "not planned" part of the route) and that touches on Le Seuer (5 minutes) and Sibley (3 minutes). Since that wasn't on the original plan, you can see the QSOs from those counties are only 8 and 6. If we were to do this route another year I would stop in those counties for 10 or 15 minutes.

We started the contest in Albert Lea (FRE) and spent the last few minutes of the contest in Dakota county.

Going Digital Mobile II

There was a good article in the on-line December 2017 issue of CQ Magazine (no print issue that month) that you can read for free at:

<http://ca.zinio.com/reader.jsp?issue=416437244&o=ext>

The article is titled Using GPS to Set Your Computer Clock in the Field by K5PA. He uses a 'hockey puck' GPS receiver unit (\$30), along with Visual Link, LLC (\$20 program) and a 10 feet USB cable to set things up so your computer clock is automatically synched to GPS.

Folks have had some issues using the previously mentioned set up. This one appears to work well, but you will spend a bit more on the hardware and software.

For WSJT-X you need to be within a second. FT-8 is about the same. This method gives you 1 millisecond accuracy.

Mobile Activity in February

At the end of January, Fred, K0FG headed out in MO headed west to CA. Lots of days on the air – and going strong at the end of the month still out west.

AB4WL/KF4INA were running counties in AL

K0ATZ was running parks in MO and would be for many days during the month

KC0ZNI was running parks in MO and would be for many days during the month

Jim, N9JF, was spotted in IL

Jim, N0UR, spotted in MN parks

N6MMA was spotted in TX, NM and AZ parks on his way west.

The MN and VT QSO parties provided opportunities for counties. Maybe one mobile in VT, several in MN (separate QSO party reports in this issue)

KC6AWX ran Kalawao, HI, Super Bowl weekend. Apparently, only a few in the '2P crowd' knew about the planned activation until it was on the air just before Super Bowl started. How many were watching spots at that time?

Peter, N4UP spotted out in VA. Then headed to GA to run counties there.

AE4RM spotted out in FL parks

Ray WB0PYF headed from MO to FL for the HamCation Hamfest – and then back home leisurely with a dozen days on the road. Many counties were on the air.

Al, W8OP was out in VA and WV.

Ed, KN4Y, was on the air from the panhandle of FL.

Kraig, KA2LHO, was putting out parks and counties in FL.

Bob, N2OO headed from FL to NJ running them on SSB along the route.

Norm, N9MM ran parks along the route from CO to TX.

Karl, K4YT headed to the 'eastern shore' of MD to put them out.

Butch, WY0A spotted out in KS

Mike, NF0N, spotted out in NE and IA headed to MN.

Jack, WD4OIN, noted out in NC putting them out.

WK2S spotted in parks in NY state.

Doug, WA4UNS spotted in NC and GA.

End date 2/23

On the Road with N4CD II

Winter was still with us in TX but the urge to go mobile hit. At the same time, the annual Houston Vintage Radio Association holds their annual convention down in Houston. Orlando Hamcation was calling and it was the same weekend as the HVRA event – but Orlando is a thousand mile drive, so Houston won out as it's only 250 miles away. So...I packed up the car for a week long trip down to southeast TX for park activation and attending the HVRA 2 day convention. Why do things I want to do always fall on the same weekends?

On Feb 7 – headed on down the road to Houston at 6am. Yep, had to get going in the dark to get through the Dallas Metroplex before 'rush hour'. Hit US75 at 6:15 and it was already full of traffic – a car every 200 feet in 4 lanes – but moving 60 mph toward downtown 25 miles away. Luckily, no accidents on the road and things kept on moving quickly down through 'downtown'. In another hour, it would take a good 90 minutes to 2 hours to do the same trip – stop and go – 15 mph if lucky - hi hi. Passed through the 'city' and south 'suburbs' with minimal problems at that hour – and zipped on down I-45

until I got to Walker County – where the Sam Houston National Forest is located. You actually have it on both sides of the interstate but aren't going to find a sign or a spot 'in the park' to run it. Got off, headed to a forest campground – and ran it. 60Q went in the log – part county hunters – part park hunters.

In another 25 miles, you can get off in Montgomery County near Conroe and find the William Goodrich Jones State Forest – another 'park' – and the log quickly showed 60+ QSOs. There's a nice parking lot there not far off the interstate.



Now it was time to zip on down to the Battleship TX and the San Jacinto Memorial tower and museum on the southeast side of Houston to see if I get both in today. Garmin GPS had it in the database so off I went. Off I-10, you see an exit for the Battleship – and I took the exit. You go about five miles then you see a sign – bridge closed 5 miles ahead. Duh – well, is the Battleship TX on this side or the other side of the closure? Garmin says destination is five miles away. No hint! What to do? Go another couple miles and it looks like – the Battleship is on the OTHER side of the bridge closure. Dang. Double dang. Hit the 'detour' button on the Garmin – and it's now a 20 plus mile detour to get to the other side. Backtrack to the interstate – head back the way I came 10 miles, then south. There's lots of water, bays, inlets and few bridges over the shipping channel. When there is a bridge, it goes up 200 feet above the

water to allow those giant ships to pass through to the various petro chemical and other plants along the river complex. So...I'm off on an unplanned detour to get to the next park. Sure would have been nice if they had one of those big road signs at the interstate exit saying – 'you can't get to BB Texas this way!'. Use alternate route. Same for web site! It's been raining all day which doesn't contribute to my great mood of frustration at this point. If you get to a park too late, it either closes – or the propagation on 20m is gone for the day.

Eventually I get to the Battleship Texas Site.



From Wiki:

“USS Texas (BB-35), the second ship of the United States Navy named in honor of the U.S. state of Texas, is a New York-class battleship. The ship was launched on 18 May 1912 and commissioned on 12 March 1914.

Soon after her commissioning, Texas saw action in Mexican waters following the "Tampico Incident" and made numerous sorties into the North Sea during World War I. When the United States formally entered World War II in 1941, Texas escorted war convoys across the Atlantic and later shelled Axis-held beaches for the North African campaign and the Normandy Landings before being transferred to the Pacific Theater late in 1944 to provide naval gunfire support during the Battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Texas was decommissioned in 1948, having earned a total of five battle stars

for service in World War II, and is now a museum ship near Houston, Texas.

Among the world's remaining battleships, Texas is notable for being the only remaining World War I-era dreadnought battleship and worthy for being one of only seven remaining ships and the only remaining capital ship to have served in both World Wars

Texas's main battery consisted of ten 14-inch (356 mm)/45 caliber Mark 1 guns, which could fire 1,400 lb armor-piercing shells to a range of 13 mi . Her secondary battery consisted of twenty-one 5-inch /51 caliber guns, She also mounted four 21-inch torpedo tubes for the Bliss-Leavitt Mark 8 torpedo, one each on the port side bow and stern and starboard bow and stern.

Among US-built battleships, Texas is notable for her sizeable number of firsts: the first US Navy vessel to house a permanently assigned contingent of US Marines, the first US battleship to mount anti-aircraft guns, the first US ship to control gunfire with directors and range-keepers (analog forerunners of today's computers), the first US battleship to launch an aircraft from a platform on Turret 2, the first US battleship to become a permanent museum ship, and the first battleship declared to be a US National Historic Landmark.”

It was raining cats and dogs so I skipped the tour of the ship – late in the day anyway. You can take a nice tour for a couple bucks. (Had the tour on the Battleship Missouri at Pearl Harbor not long ago.)

Every year – the BB TX radio club puts it on the air for 'Ships on the Air' weekend – with callsign NA5DV – similar to the ships naval call sign of NADV.

Had a good run there in the rain. Only a few tourists were taking in the site today. After the run, moved to the San Jacinto Battlefield site not far away. Time for a bit more of Texas History.



Likely everyone will recall the Alamo. The battle of San Jacinto was a turning point in this war and occurred after the Alamo. Santa Ana led an army to 'pacify' the folks living in what is currently 'Texas'. The folks there wanted to be an independent part of Mexico. About half living there were of Mexican origin, half were new settlers coming down from KY and points east. Throw in a few thousand Native Americans, too.

Sam Houston raised an army and fought the Mexicans in skirmishes all over southeast TX. At San Jacinto, in a 3 day battle, Santa Ana was captured – and a few years later, Mexico finally capitulated and Texas became an independent republic. There's a large monument there you can go up in an elevator (\$6) for a great view of Houston, the ship channel, the Battleship Texas – if it is not pouring rain like the day I was there. The monument is taller than the Washington Monument in DC – 567 feet to the top.



Had a good run late in the afternoon from the site. Drizzling rain with low ceiling. No visibility so skipped the ride up the monument.

Headed on in to a Super 8 Motel in Laporte, TX Dinner at the El Toro restaurant a mile away. Not much else for sit down restaurants in that neck of the woods.

And so ended the first day with 327 miles on the car and 4 parks successfully put out.

February 8 – Thursday

Then it was heading east to various parks along the gulf coast. No sun today – totally overcast and drizzling constantly – most of the time.

First up was Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Chambers County. I got there early at 8 am – and started on 40m. Just 7 Qs. Then off to 20m for 19 – with a dozen of them DX. You get a nice opening to Europe around that time. Then to 30m and finally to 20M SSB an hour later. Finished with 47Q.



From the state park site:

“The chorus of thousands of waterfowl, the splash of an alligator going for a swim, the rustle of wind moving through coastal prairie, the high-pitched call of a fulvous whistling duck are just some of the sound you may hear when visiting Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. This 34,000-acre haven for wildlife is located on the upper Texas gulf coast.

The meandering bayous of Anahuac NWR cut through ancient floodplains creating expanses of coastal marsh and prairie bordering Galveston Bay. Prevailing breezes bring in moisture from the Gulf of Mexico, resulting in high humidity and an average annual rainfall of over 51 inches. Coastal marshes act as a huge sponge, holding and siphoning water from tropical storm tides and upstream flooding. These marshes, combined with the coastal prairie, provide a home for an abundance of wildlife, from migratory birds to alligators. “

OK....I'll skip the alligator part. Everywhere you turn down here – it's alligator territory it seems. Found a nice little part of the NWR along the road with no power line – worked out OK. There would be a lot more N4CD visits to different NWRs along the gulf. Each is a separate park.

I was headed to McFaddin – which was the next geographically closest to where I was. I programmed it into Garmin. I didn't get there right away as it turns out you have to make a giant loop – first east – then south – then back west to get there. You pass by several others before you get there as it turns out.

Up next was Texas Point NWR– in Grid EM39 – Jefferson County. It's at the most southeast part of TX you can drive to – and in fairly rare grid EM39. You're just a few miles from LA, and most of the grid is coastal swamp/marshland and Gulf of Mexico. I checked after my upload to LoTW and there are now 35 credited QSOs for the Grid Challenge from this grid! Looks like N4CD likely made most if not all of them. There's a nice parking area about 300x300 feet and you are still close enough to civilization to have good internet for spotting. A bit of QRN from the power line – and it seems 'something' causes crap on 30m with a pulsing sound – heard it all along my route for the next 20 miles. 47Q went into the log. It's very chilly outside – 40s and total overcast. Not a good day for the tourists or bird watchers. Or the birds!



You continue southwest along the highway – the only highway – and next up is Sea Rim State Park – a great place in nice weather – right along the gulf – and back in common grid EL29 where Houston is located. Not the least bit rare with 5000 thousand Qs

uploaded for that grid. Lots of camping/RVs but not so much today with 42 degrees, wind, and rain. Of course for park activators who are self-contained, it's no sweat. If you operate from a picnic table with a temporary erected antenna – well – it's a challenge! I'd bet this place is mobbed in the spring/summer/fall. Gary, N5PHT, spent a week here so it wasn't 'rare'. Got my 44+ and left. Same county, too.



Sea Rim State Park

Two miles down the road – it ends – and you finally arrive at McFaddin NWR. The road used to continue another 30 miles but was flooded out and never rebuilt. The NWR lies along most of that closed road. Still in Jefferson County. Got my 44+ and left. If my luck held I could get in one more today.

From wiki:

“The McFaddin and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuges are located in proximity in southern Jefferson County on the upper Texas coast at Sabine Pass. The refuges have a combined 105.96 square miles of fish and wildlife habitat. McFaddin, much the larger one, has a total area of 58,861.43 acres, while the smaller Texas Point, has 8,952.02 acres.

Texas Point and McFaddin refuges supply important feeding and resting habitat for migrating and wintering populations of waterfowl using the Central Flyway. Feeding flocks of snow geese have exceeded 70,000 birds at McFaddin.

Dozens of migratory bird species use habitat on both refuges to feed, rest, nest and raise

their young. **McFaddin contains one of the densest populations of American alligators in Texas. Alligators are most easily seen during the spring, but are often visible throughout the summer and fall.**

Mammal species native to Texas include the muskrat, North American river otter, American mink, raccoon, striped skunk, Virginia opossum, nine-banded armadillo, gray fox and bobcat.

Large portions of both refuges are tidally influenced, creating estuarine environments important to a variety of fish, shrimp and crabs, as well as other life forms higher on the food chain that feed on such organisms. These estuaries are productive communities and are vital to the life cycle of many marine species. Some of the more commonly sought after fish found in refuge waters include red drum, flounder, alligator gar and blue catfish.

Located on the coast, Sea Rim State Park borders McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge.”

OK..more alligators....you won't catch me wandering through those marshes!



I'll skip the alligator part for sure! Alligator Central! No way! You see lots of birds flying here and there – and in the main season of migration north/south, you'd probably see very large numbers. I just pulled into the parking area – did my thing and left. Didn't even stop by the visitor center. Just time to maybe get in one more park for the day.

Last for the day would be Walter Umphrey State Park – actually run by the County of Jefferson but still a 'state park'. Pulled in late in the day – 2125Z – and was hoping somehow to get 44+Q. Twenty meters usually dies not long after 2:30 local time here – but sometimes hangs on longer to the west coast. You never know but low sunspots are not fun for late afternoon operation – especially during the week! Had luck and got 18 between CW and SSB on 20M – surprising. Then switched to 30 and 40m CW and finished up with 53Q. This is a small park – there were maybe 20 RV's there – and room for just a few more. The main attraction seemed to be fishing. It's right along a major river.



That night was spent at a Super 8 in Port Arthur. This place had suffered major storm damage from Hurricane Harvey floods that happened six months ago (Aug/Sept 2017). The fitness center, business center, and breakfast area were still under reconstruction. No breakfast! Dang! \$85 motel and no included breakfast. You think they'd figure

out how to have breakfast after six months. The place is 3 stories tall so rooms on the 3rd floor were in fine shape.

Friday Feb 9

Up at 6 am – no breakfast. Still gloomy and totally overcast. Headed over to the local IHOP for a nice omelet with spinach and mushrooms. Decaf coffee.

Today I'd head on in the Marriott North at Greenspoint in Houston to attend the Houston Vintage Radio Association(HVRA) annual convention along with at least 100 others.

However, there was time for one more activation – a repeat at Sheldon Lake State Park just outside Houston. So after breakfast – and in no hurry – I wandered over to this state park – in Harris County - and put it out. I had the 'early morning' DX opening to EU, so a dozen EU stations made it in the log – DL6KVA, OK1IW, PA4VHF, IK1GPG, OH6RP, DL1EJA, ON4BB, HA0ML, F6EOC, IW2NXI, DL4EKA, F5IL, IK4DRY, DL4EAM, S52KM, ON4VT, DL1EBR, ON4ON. There's a very active group – but working a mobile in the US is tough for them. Norm, N9MM, sets up the 'Vertzilla Antenna' – a full quarter wave vertical with a single sloping quarter wave radial aimed to the NE. He can at times but 25 or 30 EU calls in the log during the early morning peak to EU. Finished with over 44 so satisfied with another activation for year 2018.



Then it was into the north part of Houston and the convention hotel. A room was ready when I got there – so got to check in, and then wander down to the convention area, check in and get my bidder number for the auction, and start to see what goodies would be up for the auction.

Continued in Part III

Vermont QSO Party

Activity was better than in the past, but most stations outside VT had only a handful of contacts with VT stations.

W1NVT (W1SJ op) 132 CW 2280 SSB Q

Tremendous short skip to 2/3/4 land both days on 20 meters help inflate the QSO totals and resulted in great runs on both 20 and 40 meters afternoon and early evening. Condx to Europe were lackluster, but the contacts were there if you worked for them. CW and RTTY was tricky, working around the Spring and MX RTTY events. FT8 helped fill in some QSO's when the phone rates died off at night.

A very good operating result, but I do wish we had guest ops help out at the station.

73, Mitch

N8II - fixed - WV 11 CW 17SSB 7 CW mults 8 SSB mults

It is quite a horse race with Dave, WN4AFP with equal Q's and me having a 1 mult edge, but Dave with more CW QSO points. I was working the 2 other QP's more seriously than VTQP; whenever I heard VT, I logged it while mainly chasing down Q's in the other QP's until near the end. Amazing to have 3 different sporadic E openings to VT during a time when Es is quite rare. At 23Z Saturday, the number of VT and MN stations on 20 at any given moment was about equal! Then twice on Sunday for relatively long stretches 20 was open again. W1NVT listened for my call on 15 but no dice. I worked K1IB/M only once, wonder how many times I missed him? Conditions for such low solar activity could not have been much better to VT.

The VT winners made a lot of Q's, could have used a few more active stations. But, WVQP is getting to the point where most ops outside WV do not put in any

large amount of time due to low WV turnout.

73, Jeff

WN4AFP -fixed - SC 12 CW 12 14 SSB and 7 CW and 7 SSB mults

Enjoyed my 4th VTQP! Thanks to many multiple band and mode contacts from W1NVT and W1JXN the club station. Enjoyed working my fellow CWT op Joe K1VMT on the correct mode, then I had a great conversation with Joe on PHONE. I did make one mobile contact with K1IB. This year we missed the N1GVT mobile team which lit up the bands last year. Increased participation by VT stations over my previous years. See y'all next year!

Dave WN4AFP

KN4Y - fixed - FL - 6 CW qso 4 mults

Heard a few, worked a few, did not get skunked

On the Road with N4CD III

At the HVRA Convention – Friday and Saturday

The convention hotel rate is \$99/night, plus taxes – and you get a coupon for a 'discounted' breakfast at only \$15 including taxes and gratuity. Hmm.....but it is a great breakfast buffet. It's a large hotel with hundreds of rooms on 9 floors. The county hunter convention rate is about the same these days – you have to pay toward the extra space – ballroom and meeting rooms that get included if enough folks sign up for the event. Even then, there's always a registration fee to help offset some of the costs.

I ran into fellow county hunter Rick, AI5P, who came over to TX for this event. He collects some of the plastic and wood radios. Many of the Dallas area club members

were also down there as well.

The annual convention consists mainly of two large auctions – Friday with 'tubes and paper' followed by \$10 minimum bid items – and would go on for 5 or 6 hours from 3pm to 9pm with hundreds of lots for sale. Everything from single tubes to boxes of tubes to cartons of tubes – new in boxes – old in boxes – and boxes of pulls.

Everything from 1918 vintage tubes to tubes likely made in the 1970s, with some lots going for \$5, most from \$20 to \$30, many from \$80 to \$200, and a few for \$400-\$500 bucks! Some of the rare old audio tubes (type 45s) and power tubes command a heck of a price, and now with hi-fi nuts having to have 12AX7s, new ones in boxes can sell for \$15 or \$20 a tube. Ten years ago, you couldn't give away 12AX7s. Hi-fi power amp tubes (20-50w) new tubes in boxes can sell for \$40 to \$100 each! A Marantz Stereo amp from the way back days can go for \$400-\$800 these days if complete.

Here's the Atwater Kent Model 10 Breadboard radio. In the early days of radio, you would have to pay a hefty patent fee of \$10 or so per radio (and radios sold for \$15 to \$100), so manufacturers would sell 'kit radios' that didn't require the patent fee. Sold to 'hobbyists', the kits were complete with capacitors, inductors (coils), tube sockets, capacitors and resistors, and even 'audio amp' assembly blocks. This is one of the early ones and most expensive these days. At the left is the first tuned circuit – followed by an RF amp stage, a second tuned circuit with another RF amp stage, and then a detector and 2 tube audio amp block. You'd still use headphones – and a good 500-80 foot long antenna up high. In front of each tube, you had a gain control, and a volume control (regen) on the audio amp block. Figure \$800 and up for one of these with original finish in 'mint' shape.



Lots of boxes of 'plastic' and 'wood' radios from the 40s and 50s went by for not a lot of money. Some of the 'plastoid' radios with no damage went for \$50 and up, but most were inexpensive. There were lots of SAMS manuals and similar, and boxes of books. Loads of test equipment, tube testers, signal generators and whatnot got sold. I bought two boxes of books – one had an RGSB Handbook – a few years old. They are expensive- like the ARRL Handbook. It also had a half dozen ARRL Handbooks for the past few years – heavy! I try to follow the 'one hand rule' these days at hamfests - if I can't hold it in one hand - don't buy it! I've got way too much junk. Nothing else tugged at my wallet so finished with just to boxes of books for the day. Rick, AI5P, bought a few radios during the convention – not sure which day - wood/plastic radios. There were tons of them for sale.

Saturday Feb 10 – at the Convention

On Friday and Saturday, there is also a large room for display of items and trying to win top prize for 'best of' for the display items in 15 different categories. Took some time to check it out. I didn't bring anything to show – would have had to haul whatever around for a week on the road on this trip.

Today was the big auction - \$10 and up items – with some of the 'donations' selling for less. Half the items for the two days were 'estates' and there was a lot of mixed bags of stuff – boxes with one or two good items and a lot of other misc thrown in – just to get rid of it. You took it all or took none. There were laser video disc players, 8 track units including power amps, 16 inch transcription discs and players, 78 rpm records, wax cylinder players and cylinders, phonographs and turntables, reel to reel tape recorders, and hundreds of radios. Probably a good part the items were from 3 different estates – silent keys in the radio collector world.

Big items today for hams at least would be a Collins 75S3 receiver, the matching transmitter and the console/power supply. Well, they went for more than I was willing to pay – over \$1000 for all three units. A National SW-3 regen in very nice shape with one set of coils sold for \$140. Maybe five or six Hallicrafter receivers like the SX-99 and S-85, S-38A, C, and S-40 were up for sale, but I didn't have much interest in them. One Heathkit SB-100/HP23 sold for not much – about \$70 if I recall right. That was about it for ham equipment and 'regens'. Disappointing but you never know. The year you skip is the year 3 dozen rare regens show up!

Highest price items were several Grebe early 'breadboard receivers' in immaculate condition – selling for \$700 and \$800 and \$900. There were some early 'steam engines' that went for a thousand bucks - nice 'models'. Otherwise, most items sold for \$10 to \$50. Hundreds of items were auctioned off. Tons of test equipment from signal tracers and tube testers (\$10 to \$500 depending upon model/make), audio and RF signal generators, VTVMs, etc, went by.

I bought on box of 'goodies' that included a 220 MHz FM transceiver and Mirage 220Mhz power amp. After I got it , found out it weighed about 40lb and had to haul it out to the car. Hmm...where did my 'one hand rule' go?

The evening concluded with the annual awards dinner. I skipped that this year. Hit the hay – tomorrow it would be back to county hunting/park activation.

N2CX Park Activation

N2CX at Ft Mott K/KFF-1617 Feb 15

We went to Ft. Mott, KFF-1617, to get the rats out of the house and to enjoy unseasonable 60 degree weather.



Ft. Mott is one part of a three fort post-bellum program to provide defense along the Delaware River, presumably for Wilmington, DE and Phila, PA. Gun emplacements provided the intended security. In the middle of the Delaware River near Mott, is Pea Patch Is., home of Ft. Delaware, also a POTA site, KFF-1736. On the other side of the river is the third fort, Ft. Dupont, KFF-1737. Alas, though they are only a couple of miles apart, Ft Delaware is only reachable by warm-season ferry, and Ft Dupont is a half hour circuitous drive from Mott. To date, Ft. Delaware has been activated only once, by K0BAK, due to its limited access. I hope to be there next Summer. Only a mile or so from Mott, on the NJ side, is Supawana Meadows WR, KFF-0455. Been there several times. So, while there are a bunch of sites clustered together, access to them all can be time consuming.

The weather was pleasant, if a tad damp with river mist hanging low. The mid-winter warmup did bring out a number of cabin-fever victims seeking relief, many walking their four-legged friends seeking a different sort of relief. On setting up, I noticed a young girl on roller blades in the parking lot who had a leashed spaniel. The dog was more than happy to power her around the macadam. At one point, though, she started screeching "Shelby, SHELBY!" Seems the dog had decided to circle her, wrapping her in the leash. The spaniel sped up, thinking her plaintive cries to be encouragement. I walked over to be sure she was OK and she mentioned that she absolutely loved the excitement. We talked about dogs briefly and she mentioned that she though strange animals would make neat pets. Her goal was to have a hedgehog. I mentioned that I had a rat on my car dash. She saw Ratso with his eyes blinking away and replied "how cool is that!"

The hamming activity began with an attempt to use a different antenna setup than usual. It uses the same 16 foot fiberglass pole on the car, with a more conventional loading coil configuration. An hour of tries yielded inconsistent results. Guess that is just an opportunity (excuse?) to do more field experimentation in the future.

With the usual flaccid ionospheric conditions, things were all right, but not great. 40 was best so I suppose the MUF was depressed. One bright spot was a P2P with W4JL. We almost always catch Dave, though usually while he is ensconced in his comfy ham shack, not out braving the elements. 20 was so-so, though it did work out to the left coast and into EU for a couple of Q's. The day's highlight came on 30 meters. As things were winding to an end point, well-know rig designer and QRP'er K1SWL checked in from NH. The, in quick succession, came contacts with W1PID and W3ATB. They were out in the snow for a portable outing. It wasn't a park, but still enjoyable to catch up with the three amigos while they were making nature their shack, too.

N2CX Keystone State Park Activations Feb 17

It's always chancy getting on HF on CW contest weekends. That was true in spades on Saturday!

The first target was Ft Washington SP, KFF-1352. The last visit there was at the main park location, which features hiking trails and excellent avian viewing opportunities. This time, for convenience a more mundane but convenient parking lot by the Park Office was chosen. A signboard welcomed us but this time of year the only view was of a stubble covered field and barren trees in the background. OTOH it was close to a Wawa for sustenance and had an extremely radio-quiet conditions.



The second site, not far away was the Norristown Farm, KFF-4363. It was much more active with dogwalkers, joggers and strollers enjoying the calm before the forecast snow storm. The farm has an interesting history as being used in conjunction with an insane asylum. The connection is nebulous, both both functions are still observed. Hospitals seem to be on the mind of many PA State Park folks since there is a posting of directions to the nearest one in most of their parks. it was superfluous here, though, since Einstein Medical Center was clearly visible across the goose-inhabited, barren cornfields that comprise most of the park. That said, the park hosts a number of scheduled activities to interest the public, including demonstrations of maple syrup harvesting and samples in a

couple of weeks.

As expected, activity was slow on the air. At the first stop, 40 was not yet open for DX, so it was good for POTA and conditions were fair. 20 was jammed with contesters so was avoided, but 30 worked fairly well with perennial VE6UX gracing the log as well as ON7NQ, surprisingly one followed immediately by the other. At the second location a couple hours later, the low end of 40 was hopping with DX contest activity so a segue up to 7110 worked out pretty well. By then 20 had calmed down allowing it to prove successful, with coast to coast contacts including W6LEN and his patented 229 report. 30 was even better than earlier, again reaching out to many including VE6UX and ON7NQ. The bottom line, I guess is that frequency agility really pays off. The bottom line is that with the contacts from this day augmented those from earlier visits, the magic goal of 44 Q's was surpassed at both locations. Using QRP just means you have to work a little harder.

As we were leaving Norristown, large white flakes began falling very quickly. The rubber rat sample them, shivered, then snuggled up to a hat honoring the US Olympic team, and declared that Sunday would be devoted to watching our athletes on TV in a nice warm living room!

On the Road with N4CD IV

Sunday Feb 11

The convention was winding down. I was up early and headed on down to breakfast. Golly, just like last year, there was a large crowd of folks on a cruise who had spent the night at the hotel. At least 100 of them. They had a 'free' included breakfast so I joined in. It's a smaller buffet than normal but had oatmeal and eggs/bacon, so I joined in. No charge. They'd be out of there by 7am then the Hilton would resume their \$15 and up breakfast. The early bird got the worm.

First up was Galveston Island State Park – down in Galveston County, of course. Back in 1906, a major hurricane killed over 6000 people here in the days before adequate

hurricane warnings (no radio back then to get off shore weather reports). The city sprang back to life, but much of the shipping industry moved north – making Houston the big city it is today. You head right through town and then SW to get to the park five miles later. It's right on the Gulf of Mexico.



I arrived early at 1400z – a bit after 8am local time and started on 40m with K7SEN leading things off. Then 30M - including working OH4MDY there. AT 9am local, switched to 20M and a dozen DX stations made it in the log for the park along with a few county hunters 20M SSB produced only 8 contacts – still too early. This park had been well run by Gary, N5PHT, and others. Not the least bit rare. I'd be heading southwest from here along the coast – with bridges, bayous, and loads of water everywhere. You leave Galveston Island via a toll bridge to the southwest and continue for miles and miles.

Next up was Brazoria NWR. Conditions on 20M were better so started there and did the CW bands – then hit 20m SSB for six more. Ended up with 60Q from here.



From the state park site:

“The thunder of 40,000 snow geese taking flight, the salty breeze off the Texas Gulf, or the sight of a 12-foot alligator loafing on a muddy bank make a trip to Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex a sensory banquet in any season. Three national wildlife refuges -Brazoria, San Bernard and Big Boggy - form a vital complex of coastal wetlands harboring more than 300 bird species. They serve as an end point of the Central Flyway for waterfowl in winter, and an entry point for neotropical migratory songbirds tired from a 600-mile Gulf crossing from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Near greater Houston, the refuge complex offers haven for both wildlife and people. For wildlife, the expanse of salt and freshwater marshes, sloughs, ponds, coastal prairies, and bottomland forest represent feasting and lodging for all or part of the year. For people, these vestiges of wild Texas offer exceptional wildlife watching. Freshwater sloughs wind through salt marshes. Rare, native bluestem prairie graces the uplands. The greater the number of habitats, the richer the ecology. Brazoria NWR is no exception. It has a key location on the Texas Gulf which helps Freeport draw one of the highest Audubon Christmas bird counts in the nation - more than 200 species. “

I did my thing and skipped the bird observation. Headed on next to San Bernard NWR – more of the same. Finished there with a good run. Still time for one more!

Next up Brazos Bend State Park in Fort Bend County Started at 2045 on 20m SSB and whipped off 45 contacts there alone. Conditions on 20M were good and folks just kept coming out of the woodwork for contacts with loads of new calls in the log. That's nice on a weekend- it seldom happens during the week. Then switched to the CW bands and ended with 90Qs. It had been raining and gloomy all day.

Headed on into a motel in Rosenberg TX. Deju Vu all over again – stayed at this Super 8 before! There's a nice hamfest here each year – a bit far from home but I've checked it out once before. Dinner was at the Golden Corral nearby.

Feb 12 Monday

Back to a 'weekday' and fewer contacts. I headed out to catch a few more park units – headed to Big Boggy NWR. This is a really off the beaten path and the main attraction is 'hunting permits' during the hunting season. I followed directions to get there – you get off the main road on a very small paved road, then you come to a 'T' and the road turns to dirt. It's one car wide with giant mud tire tracks either side and it is seven more miles to get to the NWR. The first part of the road looks decent for a dirt road – but

there are puddles on it and there is water everywhere. Down along the coast, every ditch is filled to the brim with water. Often you are on a raised roadbed with nothing but water on both sides for miles. Everything here is sopping wet. I look at the road – and a pickup truck passes and heads down the road. There is no way to turn around on this 'road' – too narrow – and it looks like no places to pass another vehicle. I debate for a few minutes whether to head on down the road or skip it. This is a perfect road for a 4 wheel drive pickup or Jeep. Maybe you'd make it – maybe there would be no bad spots or low spots full of mud you had to get through to get to the NWR – or maybe not – and there was no way to turn a vehicle around. The road was maybe 8 feet wide with mud both sides. Skunked – I'm not going to head down this pathway. Someone else will have to run Big Boggy NWR. There are no signs for it either – they really don't want visitors. Dang. Well, maybe in warmer, dryer weather I'd take a chance. Now, all the fields are mud, mud, mud. There are lakes of water everywhere. I don't think it's still from Hurricane Harvey – just the normal rain along the coast – lots of it. Oh well, you win some, you lose some. At least I got to run all the counties heading down this way!

Next up was the Aransas NWR in Calhoun County. Dang...I ran through Calhoun and put it out..thinking Aransas NWR was in Aransas County. Turns out you go through that county to get there, but the park entrance, parking lot and roads are back in Calhoun. Oh well, hopefully the county hunters will work me again!. Not all do, but conditions are decent, the DX comes through, and I end up with 60Q. More marine life and bird sanctuary areas here. Probably alligators, too. Did catch PJ7TM on 17M SSB from here.



One more down this way – Goose Island in Aransas County – also turns out to be in a

rare grid, too. Ran the bands and finish with 100Q – one of the best runs of the trip.



The night before I checked motel rates down this way. Whoa – motels down this way are \$140 in Rockport and Aransas County! There aren't many and likely they are involved in Hurricane Harvey rebuilding as well. Ouch. So I head back north to Victoria to the north 30 miles for a reasonable priced one.

Drive on in to the Super 8 there. Deja Vu all over again. I've stayed at this one before, too! There was a nearby Golden Corral so headed there for dinner.

Feb 13

Now it was time to finish off a few more. First off was Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. Guess this is all about the prairie chicken, right? It's a sad story.



From Wiki:

“Attwater's prairie chicken is a highly endangered subspecies of the greater prairie chicken that is native to coastal Texas and Louisiana in the United States.

In 1900, up to one million Attwater's prairie chickens inhabited the coastal grasslands. Loss of habitat is believed to be the prime reason for their decline. One of the major factors contributing to the habitat loss was the widespread planting, beginning in the early 1900s, of Chinese tallow trees (*Triadica sebifera*) to establish a soapmaking industry. Urbanization further contributes to habitat loss. As a result of these changes over the last 100 years, the entire grassland ecosystem where Attwaters's prairie chicken once thrived exists in small, scattered patches whose continued existence is threatened. Where once grazing Plains bison and periodic wildfires due to lightning reduced brush, the birds now have difficulty making their way through thick undergrowth. Other, less-apparent changes in the ecosystem possibly have had an effect, as well.

A 1937 study recorded about 8,700 Attwater's prairie chickens remaining in four Texas counties. Attwater's prairie chicken has been on the endangered species list since March 1967 when an estimated 1070 birds were left in the wild. By 2003, there were fewer than 50 birds left in the wild.

In 2014, an estimated 260 birds remained, with about 100 living in the wild. Captive-breeding programs are underway at places such as Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, Abilene Zoo, and Caldwell Zoo (Tyler, TX).

In 2016, the population declined to 42 birds following heavy spring floods, which wiped out an entire generation of eggs. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 was even more disastrous, likely killing at least 32 birds, with only 5 females found during the post-hurricane

survey of the area.”

from the state site:

“We are sorry to report that the Attwater's prairie-chickens at the refuge did not fare well during Hurricane Harvey. Of 29 individuals being tracked before the storm (generally hens only), we only have 5 confirmed alive. An additional 3 have gone missing since the storm. Northern Bobwhite quail also took it on the chin. A quail study on the refuge had 12 quail radioed before the storm. Five were found dead after the storm, and 4 are missing, 3 confirmed alive. “



Guess it's tough to be an Attwater prairie-chicken these days. Soon the only ones you may see in the future might be only in zoos.

Didn't see any of them at the NWR – but did my thing and 93Q went in the log. Many of the parks I ran were 'first time activations' or ATNO – all time new ones. There are still some yet to be run parks in TX, mostly in the south tip.

Next I wandered over to Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Park.



Wiki: "Monument Hill and Kreisliche Brewery State Historic Sites is a historic state park located just off U.S. Route 77, south of La Grange, Texas. The park sits on a sandstone bluff above the Colorado River. Monument Hill is a crypt and memorial to the men who died in the Dawson Massacre and in the Black Bean Episode of the ill-fated Mier Expedition.



The Dawson massacre, also called the Dawson expedition, was an incident in which 36 Texian militiamen were killed by Mexican soldiers on September 17, 1842 near San Antonio de Bexar (now the U.S. city of San Antonio, Texas). The event occurred during the Battle of Salado Creek, which ended with a Texan victory. This was among numerous armed conflicts over the area between the Rio Grande and Nueces rivers, which the Republic of Texas tried to control after achieving independence in 1836.

The Kreische Brewery site commemorates the contribution European immigrants made in Texas, specifically German immigrant, stonemason and brewer Heinrich Kreische, whose house and brewery ruins are in the park. The Kreische Brewery and house were listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 16, 1975.”



There's a nice parking lot right off the highway- high up and a great radio shot to the northeast. Ran the bands and easily got 44Q. Some days it's easy - other days it's tough. It was raining so didn't do much sightseeing. Also cold. Took a quick look around. It hasn't stopped raining/drizzling for the past five days. Where's my sun? I've seen it for maybe an hour in five days.

Well, time to move on – next up Buescher State Park – pulled in, ran the bands with 20M SSB first, then the CW bands – winding up with 54Q. No time to waste – wanted to get one more in today.



A few miles away is Bastrop State Park – same deal – campsites, picnic sites, etc. Pulled in and whipped off 55Q. Enough – this has been run by others so no need to push it. In fact, hundreds of Qs have been made here. It's not far from Austin and San Antonio.



Nearby – less than two miles away, is a Super 8 motel. Deja Vu again.....I've stayed there before, too. I arrive and I recognize the place. This one has a weird layout. China Buffet for dinner – a chain but always good. \$10.

Wednesday Feb 14

Time to get on home – but still time for more. I'm up early – real early and hit the free breakfast at the Super 8 at 6:15.

Today it's total fog outside. Whoa – I can't see 30 feet in front of the car – as I slowly get out of the parking lot, down a side street – and over to the main highway that has about 100 foot visibility. It's only a mile or from there to the park, fortunately. Arrive safely. Normally I don't get going until sunrise time. That's about 7:10 AM here.

By 6:45 am I am at Bastrop State Park again for the 1300z session of the CWT (CW Test) that lasts an hour from 1300-1400z, and then later in the day from 1900-2000Z. It's a good way to participate each Wednesday – work 30-40-50 stations in a hour – and get them in the log. My keyer speed is increased to 29 wpm for this and folks zip along at 30+ wpm. This helps keep your CW speed up! The exchange is your Name and CW Open number, or if you don't have one, your state.

The loud stations put 100Qs into the log in an hour. I do 'search and pounce'. Not many call me if I try to sit on a frequency and run with my mobile signal. 40M is hopping this time of day – and folks are on 80M as well. Over 50Q go in the log. Maybe I'll snag a few new grids for February? I'm out of there by 8 am headed to the next park.

The last park for the trip is McKinney Falls State Park – already well run by others, but new for me. I get my 44+ and don't hang around any longer than the pile ups last. No reason to push it and call CQ with few responses. It's now a long way to home – 250 miles – a good 4 hours up the interstate.



I hit the interstate I-35 – with 50 miles of 2 lane 'cattle chutes' for construction - and

slower speed limits (50-55), with the rest at 70 and 75 mph speed limits on 3 and 4 lane each side highway. Fortunately only one accident occurred along the route and it is in the final stages of clean up and doesn't slow things down. Home by 2pm. Whew. Drizzled half the way home. I'm thoroughly water logged. Enough! I'm ready for some sun!

1575 miles of driving, one heck of a lot of QSOs to be entered, one by one, into Fast Log Entry then uploaded to LoTW and the WWFF database for all the parks.

Thanks for riding along.

ARRL MOBILE DX AWARD

ARRL Announces Mobile DXCC Operating Award

This week, ARRL announced a Mobile DXCC Operating Award, available to radio amateurs who have contacted at least 100 DXCC entities from a working vehicle, with antennas and power source capable of operating while in motion. ARRL Radiosport Manager Norm Fusaro, W3IZ, advised those pursuing the award to put safety first.

"Distracted driving is a serious concern, so we hope all mobile operators exercise care when operating from a moving vehicle," he said.

A mobile QSO appropriate for this award is defined as a QSO made from a mobile station which is contained in a legally licensed, self-propelled, land-based vehicle capable of movement before, after, or during the QSO and which provides all power to the radio equipment (no commercial or external electrical power can be used), and using only antennas mounted fully on the same mobile vehicle or a directly connected attachment and which moves together any time the vehicle is moved. The vehicle station must make the QSO with the DX entity exclusively and directly using only the mobile station. Use of any remote station, radio repeater, and internet interfaced station or system to assist in making the QSO is not permitted. Any contact made with antennas set-up or usable only when stopped to make the QSO (for example, a dipole or yagi) is classified as "portable" and not "mobile" for this award. Mobile stations may use any legal power for the entity wherein they are located. This award specifically excludes

QSOs made by aeronautical or maritime mobile stations.

How To Apply

To apply for the Mobile DXCC, just send a list of your contacts including call signs, countries/entities and contact dates. Do not send QSLs. The list must also carry a signed statement from you that all of the contacts were made from a mobile station as described above.

Along with your contact list, include \$16 for US certificate shipments or \$18 for international certificate shipments. Please include your fee in the form of a check or money order in US funds. Make sure to indicate your mailing address and your name as you want it to appear on the certificate. Mail everything to: Mobile DXCC, ARRL, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111.

The Mobile DXCC is a one-time award and is non-endorsable. Contacts made any time in the past do count toward the award. QSLs are required, but you do not need to submit them.

You do not have to be an ARRL member to qualify for this award.

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Note de N4CD

MARAC also offers a “Mobile DX Award” for working 100 countries. Only log data required and low fees.

“DX Mobile Award

OBJECTIVE: To make contacts with amateur radio operators in DXCC countries while operating mobile.

SPECIAL RULES: The ARRL DXCC List in effect at the time the award application is received by MARAC is used to determine valid DXCC entities for this award. The applicant’s home DXCC country cannot be used for this award unless the applicant makes the contact while mobile in a different DXCC entity. For example, a German applicant could count a contact with Germany if the contact was made while the German

ham was mobile in Italy. Valid Contacts with Alaska or Hawaii can be counted by applicants from the “lower 48” United States because Alaska and Hawaii are different DXCC entities. Aeronautical or maritime mobiles must be within the territorial limits of the country for which a contact is claimed.

AWARD LEVELS: Basic Certificate for 25 DXCC entities New Certificates for 50, 75, and 100 DXCC entities Plaque for 150 or more DXCC entities

APPLICATION AND FEES: Standard application, logs, and fees. The standard certificate fees also apply to seals for each level. List contacts alphabetically by DXCC entity call sign.

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Hmmm...checked my LoTW – only been uploading mobile contacts since I started. I'm up to 54 countries without trying too hard! Probably have another 10 with QSL cards from folks like VK4AAR, PY8YL and others in the past. We used to have a bunch of DX county hunters like HB9RG, VK4AAR, OH3JF, YV5OIE, and lots more I don't recall at the moment. Had one active station in Ireland – of course, Eddie, G4KHG, OH3JF, and loads more. Low sunspots sure don't help them. Now, DK3BN, occasionally DL6KVA, DL3DXX, PA3ARM, and often IK0MHR.

Chasing Parks on the Air

Probably every day, there's half a dozen parks on the air activations. You'll see a few of them on CH.W6RK.com spotting site, but many go unspotted. Bob, KA9JAC, will sometimes spot them for us county hunters on the county hunter site, but he's not always around. Even more show up on weekends.

If you are sitting around moaning about the lack of mobiles, perhaps you should be watching the page where nearly all activations get spotted. This is the WWFF-KFF Facebook page or on Dxsummit.fi . You can look there on FB (but not spot unless a member of the group) and most days at least a few activations take place. If you are not

chasing DX, set the Dxsummit filters to “K” for US and you'll only see US stations.

Most of the park activators don't worry about the county – but it is darn easy to figure out for most of them. If you have a Windows Computer, you can keep one window open for CH.W6RK, another window for Facebook WWFF-KFF page, and a third window for

<http://countyhunter.com/Toplist/KFF-County.htm>

which gives a cross reference between park numbers – KFF-XXXX and the county they are in!

So if you see a spot for KFF-2909 Paris Mountain SP - you can quickly determine this is in Greenville County SC and he is on 14275.

A few parks are in multiple counties. In that case, you either need to ask the activator where he is - on the air or by email if you work him, or do some research on your own. In some cases, the only access to the park is in one county with the rest of it total wilderness elsewhere in the other counties.

Happy hunting.

County Sign Database Project

No updates since November, but most likely remain as 'needs'. See what you can do to capture a county line sign (or if desperate, a county building sign).

CA - California (12 Counties Needed)

El Dorado, Fresno, Kings, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Sutter, Yuba

CT - Connecticut (8 Counties Needed)

Fairfield, Hartford, Litchfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London, Tolland, Windham

GA - Georgia (7 Counties Needed)

Atkinson, Catoosa, Coffee, Haralson, Lincoln, Richmond, Wilkes

IL - Illinois (8 Counties Needed)

Calhoun, Fulton, Jasper, Marion, Mason, Menard, Stark, Washington

IN - Indiana (17 Counties Needed)

Brown, Carroll, Clay, Delaware, Floyd, Franklin, Grant, Howard, Lawrence, Madison, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Putnam, Sullivan, Tipton, Vigo

KY - Kentucky (10 Counties Needed)

Boyd, Carter, Clark, Floyd, Jefferson, Mercer, Montgomery, Morgan, Nelson, Washington

MA - Massachusetts (6 Counties Needed)

Barnstable, Berkshire, Bristol, Essex, Franklin, Worcester

MD - Maryland (4 Counties Needed)

Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Carroll, Somerset

ME - Maine (4 Counties Needed)

Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, York

MN - Minnesota (1 County Needed)

Jackson

NC - North Carolina (7 Counties Needed)

Halifax, Iredell, Jackson, Onslow, Pamlico, Rowan, Wilson

ND - North Dakota (10 Counties Needed)

Burke, Cavalier, Dickey, Grand Forks, LaMoure, Mountrail, Richland, Sargent, Sioux, Walsh

NH - New Hampshire (3 Counties Needed)

Hillsborough, Merrimack, Sullivan

NJ - New Jersey (8 Counties Needed)

Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Monmouth, Ocean

NV - Nevada (2 Counties Needed)

Douglas, Washoe

NY - New York (8 Counties Needed)

Kings, Nassau, New York, Ontario, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk, Westchester

OH - Ohio (5 Counties Needed)

Butler, Hamilton, Jefferson, Monroe, Pike

PA - Pennsylvania (15 Counties Needed)

Adams, Allegheny, Bedford, Blair, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Lawrence, Mc Kean, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Somerset

RI - Rhode Island (5 Counties Needed)

Bristol, Kent, Newport, Providence, Washington

TN - Tennessee (6 Counties Needed)

Campbell, Coffee, Perry, Robertson, Sumner, Trousdale

UT - Utah (1 County Needed)

Washington

VA - Virginia (3 Counties Needed)

Arlington, Clarke, Pulaski

WA - Washington (2 Counties Needed)

Ferry, Okanogan

Needs are posted here:

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

FT-8

Some will tell you FT-8 is “the greatest thing since sliced bread” Others will tell you “it's the death of ham radio.” So what is it?

FT-8 is a digital protocol developed and deployed last year in 2017. It was an improvement to JT-9 that typically takes 8 or 9 minutes to complete a weak signal QSO and works at very low signal levels – below the 'noise' on the band. Developed primarily for VHF, JT-9 found it's way to HF. To speed it up, the original developers came up with the next generation protocol system – FT-8. It is short and only allows 13 characters to be sent at a time.

FT-8 allows QSOs to take place in 90 seconds – from start to finish. It requires a lot of computer power to process things. You start with a decent rig – one with a USB connector makes things easier - and an interface box to your computer. You probably will need a handy dandy utility to keep your PC time clock set within a second or better on it. There are various digital programs that you can use on your PC to do the work of controlling the radio, decoding the messages and displaying them. You can find tutorials on the web about FT-8. If you are using a program already for PSK, it likely will do FT-8.

It seems that since the ARRL Grid Challenge started – half of all QSOs seem to be digital and likely most FT-8.

QSOs are bare bones – call signs, signal report and grid info. That's it. Every exchange has to fit in 13 characters – which after call signs isn't a whole lot of space. You click on a CQ – then the computer takes over and does the QSO. You sit back and watch.

There are dozens of tutorials on the web. Here are a few to check things out. (Mobile operation is a bit more challenging – as you likely either need internet access to time your clock, or use GPS with an interface to the PC to extract the time signal).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIIA_utAJfs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoCngsKW9tc>

If you listen on 30m, there's usually not much going on. At best, one or two QSOs, maybe one or two CQ's – the same folks day in and day out – and a hornets nest of digital signals in the band – same on 20M CW. No much CW activity but the digital bands are full of signals. So full, in fact, they are talking about more frequencies for digital.

So....it seems that much of the current activity, especially in the sunspot cycle minimum, is going digital and FT-8 with short QSOs exchanging nothing but calls, grid, and signal report. No rag chews, no other info – no QSOs as we knew it in the past.

At the local ham club, there was an interesting presentation, and a demonstration QSO made on FT-8. So far, it's interesting but I'm not hooked at this point. Who knows what will be the direction of ham radio in 10 years?

Good? Bad? Just another mode? Who knows? FT-8 is not even a year old and it is immensely popular. It's a way to work DX when the band is barely there – or when you are hearing nothing on CW or SSB – it's working below the noise floor.

CW Stats

Dennis, KK7X, is compiling the annual totals of CW stats. You can see the current listings (you did update your totals right? Still not too late) - at:

http://countyhunter.com/county_hunter_cw_stats.html

Awards Issued

Master Gold #6 9

Doug, WA4UNS

Upcoming Events for County Hunters

March 3 0000 to 4 2359
ARRL International DX Contest,
SSB Ph RS, SP (W/VE) or power (DX)
www.arrl.org/arrl-dx

March 10 1500 to 11 2000
Oklahoma QSO Party
CW Ph Dig RS(T), county or SPC
k5cm.com/okqp.htm

March 10 1900 to 11 1900
Idaho QSO Party
CW Ph Dig
RS(T), county or SPC
idahoarrl.info

March 11 1800 to 12 0100
Wisconsin QSO Party
CW Ph Dig County or SPC
www.warac.org

March 17 1400 to 18 0200
Louisiana QSO Party
CW Ph Dig RS(T), LA Parish or SPC
laqp.louisianacontestclub.org

March 17 1400 to 18 2359
Virginia QSO Party
CW Ph Dig Serial, VA county or SPC
www.qsl.net/sterling

March 24 0000 to 25 2359
CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB Ph RS, serial
www.cqwp.com

Lots of other contests going on in March. See the ARRL Contest Corral at:

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Contest%20Corral/2018/March%202018%20Corral.pdf>

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Date for 2018 **MICHIGAN MINI** is April 26 – 27 & 28th.. It will be held at the Holiday Day Inn West Bay Beach Resort again in 2018 with room rates of: \$93.96 plus tax per night if reserved by March 25th, 2018.

West Bay Beach – Holiday Inn Resort 615 East Front Street • Traverse City, Michigan 49686 Phone: (231) 947-3700 • Fax: (231) 947-0361 Toll Free: (800) 888-8020)

You can reserve on line right now...info on the marac.org web page. Ed, K8ZZ and W8TVT, Joe, would appreciate folks reserving early to help defray the necessary expenses involved in putting this event on each year.

Dayton Hamvention – at Greene County Fairgrounds – Xenia OH May 18-20

Hamcom Dallas Hamfest June 8 –9

That's all folks !

73