

County Hunter News

May 1, 2016
Volume 12, Issue 5

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 and 14.324. 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

Wow – another exciting month with lots of activity, QSO Parties, Parks on the Air, trips by various county hunters all over the country, and more. We're running a bit late with the newsletter this month – been off traveling and have to catch up.

1) Seems not only MARAC is having some award problems, but rumor has it that CQ Magazine has 5 new USCA numbers on hold waiting for the special paper to print the large USCA certificates. Folks have completed the award, the requested cards

verified, but no formal announcement yet. Well, at least my CQ Magazine shows up most months these days. We'll just have to wait for the special paper to arrive so the certificates can be printed.

2) Scottie, N4AAT, sent along a picture – he labeled it “Triple Trouble” and noted he sent a special copy to Percy, KA1JPR. Likely Percy will quickly forward it to James. Here it is for your enjoyment - and good to see his sense of humor is in fine shape.



Joyce, N9STL, Scottie, N4AAT, Bob N4CD
“Triple Trouble”

Mobile Activity This Month

Jim, N9JF was busy putting them out in IL

WB5TMW was active in TX.

Jack, K0MAF, was spotted in FL.

Don, K3IMC, was off on another big trip trying to finish running all 3077 counties.
Noted in OK and other states

Jack, WD4OIN, was on a multi-week trip out west.

Gene, K5GE took the county hunter way to get to the convention in MI.

Terry, WQ7A, headed east from WA to the mini in MI.

More than a dozen mobiles converged on Traverse City for the mini – including KB0BA/N0XYL, , W0NAC/N0LXJ, KB9YVT/KA9JAC, N8KIE, K5GE, W4SIG, NF0N, W0GXQ, WA9DLB, N4CD, K8AO, and more.

Silver , N9QS, headed to VA.

W0BH headed to GA to run in the QP there, as well as W3DYA and and others.

Ron, KB6UF headed up to Maine. He'll run around the state one of these weeks.

K4BAI was noted out mobile in GA at the end of the month.

N4UP was noted out and about in VA.

Jack, K0MAF, was spotted in MO.

Kalawao was on the first few days of the month with a multi-op expedition that made 4000 QSOs from the National Park.

Bob WA3QNT put out counties during the month in PA.

Barry, K2MF was spotted in NC.

Bob, N8KIE, landed again in the 'lower 48'. Ran around in the SF area for a week, then headed back home to MI via half a dozen National Parks.

KA2LHO ran a few in NY.

Mike, KA4RRU, was busy putting out park units and counties in VA and nearby.

Kent, KV7N was noted out in ID and UT and other states.

Paul, K1TKL headed up to the DX Convention running counties on the way.

Dick, K4XU ran some in ID – on the way to Visalia.

K7TM was noted out and about in ID.

Idaho QSO Party – Late

Late but always a good write up!

WW7D mobile - ID QSO Party 463 CW 257 SSB QSO

This is the 4th consecutive year that I have participated in the IDQP. The state's landscape, geological features, roads, and weather still intrigue me. And the state rewards my attention with surprises and new experiences every time.

For this year, my objective was to hit 26 counties (like last year) and do a better balance between phone and CW. Last year I made only 161 SSB QSOs and 530 CW QSOs. In some sense this is good as CW QSOs are two points to an SSB QSO's one point. But multipliers accumulate by mode. And for the IDQP, mobile stations start accumulating multipliers in each county. Therefore, providing a better balance between phone and CW should lead to lower point totals but more multipliers.

A second objective was to improve my mobile antenna set-up. I discuss that more below.

Station

My trusty 1988 Toyota pickup truck served as the mobile platform. The primary rig was a Kenwood TS-480SAT running 100W. I also had a couple of FT-857Ds along for the

ride. I made a couple of QSOs on one of the Yaesus. The other one monitored 146.52 for reasons unrelated to the contest. Its contest function was to serve as a back-up for the other two HF rigs.

Antennas included three homebuilt screwdrivers that I refurbished last fall with better finger stock. Each antenna had a custom whip/hat set-up to cover two bands. Two of the antennas had home made capacitance hats, and I cut the top whip antennas to bring the total antenna height up to just under the 14' legal limit when used on the lowest band. There was one antenna mounted in a rotor on a bracket on front of the truck. The other two antennas were mounted near the rear of the bed (left=driver's side and right). Additionally, a 1/4 wave 10m whip antenna was mounted in the front of the bed on the left.

I planned a daytime and nighttime configuration for the screwdriver antennas. During the day, the front antenna would be on 40m, the right-rear antenna would be on 20m and the left-rear antenna on 15m. The front antenna could easily be moved to 80m if necessary during the day, if only because I could easily see the tuning mark. Once 40m started opening up, the night-time configuration would have the right rear set for 40m, front to 80m and left-rear to 20m.

A home built antenna switch allowed me to move antennas between the two rigs.

Route Overview

I worked hard to improve on the route from 2015. In particular, I tried working in an additional county in the same amount of time. But I couldn't do that and end up in the western part of the state for my drive home. I did make a few minor changes to the stops and the timing of some stops. The schedule was posted here a few days before the contest.

The plan for day one begins on the Lemhi–Clark county line on the Salmon highway followed by an eastbound trek to the Madison–Teton county line. From there, the route backtracks a bit before heading south, eventually taking a short spur into Twin Falls county. From there the route zig-zags north to Blaine county and then west through Camas, Elmore and ending at a motel in Boise (Ada county).

Sunday morning begins before sunrise with a trip up to the Boise–Gem county line located several miles down a dirt road off of highway 55. The route backtracks from there through Ada county into Canyon, takes a detour through Owyhee county and then

north through Canyon, Payette and ends on the Payette–Washington county line.



WW7D on County Line
3 Screw Driver Antennas

The trip to Idaho Falls started on Friday morning just after 9am. This is about a 12 hour direct trip through Oregon, following interstate highways to Idaho Falls. I took a side route through a national park that allowed me to activate a National Park for the ARRL's National Parks on the Air (NPOTA) program. I left for Idaho with all of the antennas deployed. The primary reason was that I wanted to practice using the radio and antennas as warm-up for the contest. Along the way I chased Summits on the Air (SOTA) activations, and managed to work about a half dozen of these QRP stations.

It was getting dark out about the time I hit Boise, ID. Between Boise and Mountain Home, one of the screwdriver antennas broke. This is the third or fourth time I've had one of the screwdrivers fail in this way. My screwdrivers are built pretty much like the W6AAQ plans. This includes a PVC slip bushing at the base with a 3/4" copper pipe reducer threaded into the bottom. The PVC slip bushing is the weak link. One screwdriver fails in this way every two or three contests. The 15m antenna bit it this time. Fortunately, failures are non-events. A heavy ground wire, coax and motor control cable held the downed antenna inside the bed of the truck.

At Mountain Home (after removing the screwdriver), I took a diversion north on Hwy 20 and followed the margin between the upper Snake River Plain and the southern Sawtooth National Forest. This led me to the north end of Craters of the Moon National

Monument and Preserve. I stopped in a park parking lot and spent an hour handing out pairs of NPOTA QSOs—pair because I was in both a national preserve and a monument simultaneously. For me, it was a great warm-up for the forthcoming IDQP.

Saturday morning I stopped by a hardware store on the way to my starting point to pick up a new slip bushing for the broken screwdriver. As I approached my starting point on the Lemhi–Clark county line, there was another car parked just past the sign. “Oh-oh,” I thought, “someone has the same idea for a starting point.” Alas, it turned out to be some people photographing the mountains to the west. I repaired the broken screwdriver and then scanned the bands in preparation for the start.

The Contest

At the start of the contest, 20m was the only band that appeared to be open, and that seemed a little slow. Consequently there were only 21 stations who worked me in Lemhi County, all but three QSOs were on 20m the rest on 15m.

The 20m band gradually opened up as I moved to Butte, Jefferson, and Madison. I skipped stopping in Fremont on my east-bound trip, as I was occupied with traffic in the town of Teton.

The 20m band was pretty productive by the time I hit the Madison–Teton county line. Here I got my longest 15m run of eleven QSOs (times 2 because I was on a county line). The band was largely out of play for the rest of the day, and most of Sunday.

I backtracked toward I-15 and stopped for about 25 minutes in Freemont County. Sometime after 2300 UTC, I made a few 15m and 20m QSOs, and then 20m fizzled out and 40m started opening up. I hit Bonneville County at 2348 UTC and had a heck of a time raising anyone. I ended up with only 6 QSOs by the time I reached Bingham county at 0008 UTC. My last 20m QSO of the day was at 0010.

Fortunately, 40m was moderately productive after 20m closed down. I even got a fair 80m run going while in Power county, working stations from VA to NE to OR. At the Bannock–Power county line, I exited onto US 30 and then onto a railroad frontage road that had a county line intersection. That 30 minute stop was moderately productive, but the noise levels were high in this industrial area.

The next stop was supposed to be the Cassia–Minidoka county line. But I had fallen

about 15 minutes behind schedule, so I sailed through Minidoka making 21 QSOs in the 15 minutes it took to traverse the county. That got me to Jerome County 15 minutes ahead of schedule and in the dark. About half way through the county I took a diversion south, across the Snake River and into Twin Falls County, where I stopped at a scenic overlook (that isn't at all scenic in pitch black). It was here that 75m yielded something of a run.

From Twin Falls County, I was back in Jerome County for a spell. By the time I reached Gooding County, it started raining and the QSO rate started to taper off. Gooding County produced seven QSOs in 25 minutes. Lincoln produced 10 QSOs in 30 minutes. After a few unsuccessful moments calling CQ on the Lincoln–Blaine county line, the cold rain convinced me that my progress might be slowed by weather. Indeed, once I hit about 5,000 feet, the rain turned to slushy snow. The snow continued, at times in near white-out intensities through parts of Blaine, all of Camas and parts of Elmore counties. Fortunately the snow was melting when it hit the road, except for a couple of slushy patches.

I was able to focus almost entirely on driving during my trek over 5000' AGL as the CW keyer's endless stream of CQs bore little fruit. In all, there were four Blaine County QSOs, only three in Camas County and a mere two in Elmore County. I got one more QSO in Ada County before arriving at the motel around 12:30am MST for a few hours of sleep.

Five hours later, I was back behind the wheel, heading north to the foothills north of Bosie and west of the Boise Mountains to the intersection of Gem and Boise Counties. While still in Ada County, I managed to work one station each on 20m, 40m and 80m, and the same station again on 80m before I went QRT while driving the mud road to the county line.

In the 70 minutes I sat on the Gem–Boise line, I made 39 pairs of QSOs, primarily on 20m, but a pair on 80m and a few on 15m. This location has provided a much higher yield in past contests, but I'll take what I can get. A nice surprise was working a handful of German stations.

I retraced my steps back to Ada County, which has very high noise levels. I only managed four 20m QSOs before hitting Canyon County with about 13 QSOs for 13 minutes. Here, again, I worked four German stations. I crossed the Snake River into Owyhee County and sat in a river-side park parking lot just over the bridge. The rate picked up to about one QSO per minute. The DL stations were joined by one HA stations.

For the next 50 minutes, I traveled through Canyon County (20 min) and Payette County (30 min) that yielded 8 and 24 QSOs respectively, the majority on 20m phone. DX included SM, DL and KL.

I hit Washington County with 70 min left in the contest and parked on the county line for the duration. The rate picked up a bit here, with about 50 pairs of QSOs and a good mix of phone and CW. Most QSOs were on 20m, but I switched to 15m with 15 minutes remaining in the contest for seven additional pairs of QSOs.

Score

I finished with 719 valid QSOs (not including 19 dupes). Last year the total came to 691 valid QSOs, so I slightly improved on my previous score (but nothing compared to the 802 QSOs from 2014).

The breakdown by mode was 467 CW and 252 phone QSOs. I accomplished a much better balance this year compared to 530 CW and 161 phone QSOs last year.

Lots of pictures in the full write up at:

<https://ww7d.wordpress.com/2016/03/30/ww7ds-2016-idaho-qso-party-results/>

New Coloring Books

Sam, W5GND, is now printing the Coloring Books (county map books) similar to those previously printed by Magellan (N4UJK) and the B&B shop (W0OWY). They are \$15 postpaid. He's gone to extra effort to make the county names 'readable' with larger type for them.

National Parks On the Air

From Rick, AI5P:

On Monday, March 21st, I stopped at Ft Union on the way to Denver. When New Mexico became United States territory after the U.S.-Mexican War, the army established garrisons in towns scattered along the Rio Grande. For a number of reasons, this proved unsatisfactory. In 1851 the Headquarters of the 9th Military Department moved from Santa Fe ("that sink of vice and extravagance") to a site near the Mountain and Cimarron branches of the Santa Fe Trail - becoming Fort Union. There were actually three forts established here: 1851-61, 1861-62, and 1863-91. This was the largest U.S. Army installation on the 1880's Southwestern frontier and at one time had three commands headquartered there at the same time: The Ordnance Depot or Arsenal, The Quartermaster Depot, and the Fort Union Post. Conditions weren't too good on the bands - only 81 contacts in the logbook. Very historic Army post!



AI5P at Fort Union, CO



Later that afternoon (March 21) I visited a new park for me - Capulin Volcano Nat Monument. This very intriguing volcano is about 30 miles east of Raton, New Mexico. This volcano erupted about 60,000 years ago and its conical form rises over 1300 feet above the plains to 8182 feet above sea level. You can actually drive up to near the top rim of the volcano. Unfortunately, I got there around 3 p.m. and they close at 4:30 p.m. so I didn't have the opportunity to hike around the rim - about a 1 mile trail.



So I have to plan to revisit this one! Conditions were much better so 165 contacts make

it into the log before I had to close down. From the parking lot there was about a 90 degree wide-open shot to the west and northwest - all other directions were blocked by the volcano rim. Worth the visit!

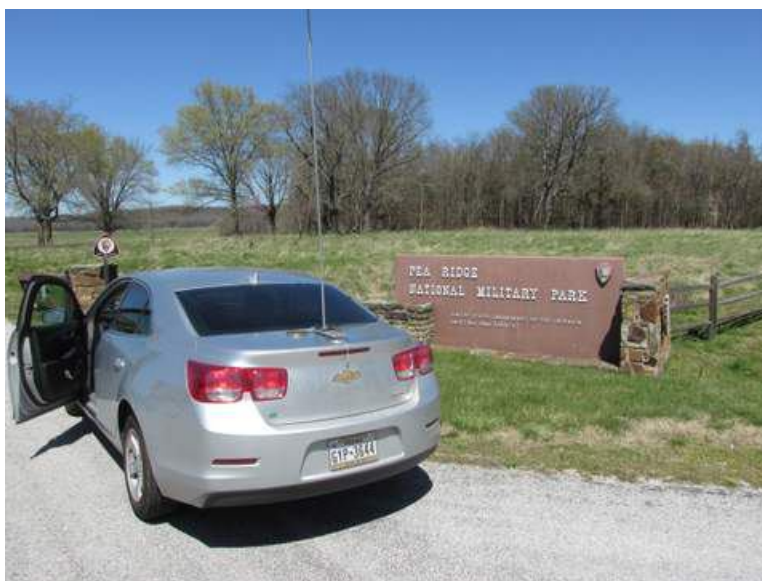
73 Rick AI5P

On the Road with N4CD I

NPOTA fever struck again! Time for more parks to be put out – along with a bunch of new Double Diamond Transmit Counties plus counties for the folks. The more parks I put out, the further 'new ones' were from the house.

I had a weekend or 3 days I could use to get to some new ones. Saturday morning early – way before sunrise, I was on the road headed to AR via the same boring counties up US 75/69 and across on I-40. 270 miles of previously run counties but put them out anyway. You never know who is around on a Saturday who might need them, and the DX was in there – but not strong. The A and K indexes were kicking up with a geomagnetic storm caused by a CME event. Not to worry – as long as I got at least 10 contacts per park to get a qualified 'activation'.

After 270 miles of driving I arrived at Ft Smith, previously run, for a repeat. If you run a park again, you get 'activation credit' for doing that. OK, I could run up my totals a bit since I had to go past it anyway. I took an hour detour to make 44 QSOs – a few new people had joined the chase, plus half the Qs were county hunters working me in Sebastian, AR. I moved a few miles to Riverside Park and ran the Trail of Tears TR-12 again for 14Qs. Didn't stick around long – time to get to the next one – a new one. So it was a 70 mile quick trip up to Pea Ridge National Military Park, AR. Never heard of it? Me either until this park business started.



N4CD Pea Ridge AR - MP07

This site protects the Civil War Battlefield – and the fight of March 7 and 8 1862. In the battle, Union Army forces led by Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis defeated Confederate troops under Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn effectively securing Missouri, St. Louis, the Missouri River and the Upper Mississippi River for the Union. Pea Ridge marks the successful culmination of the Union's effort to secure control of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and protect the arsenal at St. Louis, which made easier the supply of Gen. Grant's Vicksburg campaign. The park encompasses 4,300 acres and includes a seven-mile, self-guided tour with 10 stops featuring wayside exhibits. The park's Elkhorn Tavern is a historic stop not only in regard to the Civil War, but also because of the Butterfield Overland Mail Co and the Trail of Tears. (Well, dang – should have read up on it earlier – missed a potential two-fer – hi hi). Did 74Qs from there on CW. Didn't run SSB as someone else just ran it, and another ham headed there the next day! Had places to be and time was running short.

There are cw park chasers – but there are 4 or 5 times as many on SSB....maybe 8 or 10 times as many! This was the MO QSO and MS QSO Party weekend and the SSB bands were pretty well jammed up with stations calling from those states, or the big powerful stations calling 'CO MO' trying to shake a few more Qs out. That doesn't leave a lot of room for little old mobiles trying to activate a park. Woe to the QRP guys on SSB, too – they really struggle. Just like county hunting! Not that many cw folks, but we convert a few SSB types who will show up with a spot.

So far I had cell/data coverage and could self spot. That makes a big difference – both for county hunting and for the parks.

I was working a few of the MO stations and mobiles when I could hear them – on 40M. I was 'too close' to MO for half the state – right near the border.

There was still time to hit another park before closing time – so I quickly zipped another 60 miles north to the George Washington Carver historic site in MO. Remember your history? Carver as also known as the 'Peanut Man'. Now I was in MO and I could give out the MO counties as I traveled along. Hit McDonaldthen waited for the NP in Newton CO to run that.



N4CD at GW Carver - MN39

George Washington Carver National Monument is located two miles west of Diamond, Missouri in Newton County. The national monument was created on July 14, 1943, by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It was the first national monument dedicated to a black American and first to a non-President. The site preserves of the boyhood home of George Washington Carver.. The 210-acre park has a 3/4 mile nature trail, museum, and an interactive exhibit area for students. Carver based on his research into and promotion of alternative crops to cotton, such as peanuts and sweet potatoes, which also aided nutrition for farm families. He spent years developing numerous products made

from peanuts.

I did a quick zip into the visitor center, but the park closes at 5pm. I was there at 4pm. I whipped off 76 cw QSOs in an hour then had to leave. I could come back, but conditions were pretty miserable with the high A/K so that was enough. Others had/were planning on running it in the next day or two. W9RWB, Randy, was doing all these parks as well and he is an SSB only op. Runs QRP to a SuperAntenna (shorty 2 foot mast, hand adjusted resonator, and 4 ft whip on top – with a few radials at the bottom). I had to leave the park at 5pm. Not many were left calling on cw.

The next park was an hour to the east. I split the difference and stopped at a motel right off I-44 in Mt Vernon, MO – at an American Best Value Inn - \$63 including tax. Not bad. Dinner was at the recommended Red Barn – very good country cooking - had the BBQ buffet (\$11). Slept well. 459 miles the first day.

Sunday began early with breakfast at 6:30am. On the road at 7am headed the 30 miles or so to Wilson's Creek Battlefield just outside Springfield, MO. It doesn't 'open' till 8am but I'd see if I could get there early and put out the park – in luck – no gate! You can park in the visitor parking lot. The gate to the battlefield tour road opens at 8am now along with the visitor center now on 'summer hours'.

Here, Union and Confederate forces fought each other in 1861 in the first major battle west of the Mississippi. A union general was killed – the first general lost in the Civil War by the union. About 1200 died on each side in the fighting. The Confederate forces 'won' this battle and tried to control southwest MO. They would have limited success and finally be stopped at the battle of Pea Ridge a year later.

Found a parking spot in the lot which was quiet and put it out on CW. 98 CW QSOs went in the log in a bit over an hour and a half– about 20 from county hunters – the rest from park hunters. Around 9am, Randy W9RWB, shows up. He's scheduled to 'activate the park' at 1500Z (10am local time). He had done it two days before so this would be a repeat. He and wife wanted to tour the site this time – so after a short eyeball, off he went. He was staying nearby. I made a few more Qs in the MO QSO Party that just started again and then bugged out.



W9RWB/N4CD

Wilson's Creek Battlefield in MO

Now it was time to get a moving down into AR. Down highway 65 to the AR border...past Branson – no country music this tirp - then onto twisty turny twisty 2 lane up, down and around northern AR roads that take a while to get anywhere. I was headed to Buffalo River recreation area – RV02 in the middle of nowhere in AR. Nice scenery. Nice rural homes out in the boonies. The road goes up, along, down a half dozen ridges. You get a workout with the steering wheel and don't make much time getting anywhere. After 2 hours it seems, I get down to Ponca, AR. The recreation area is about 50 miles long and highways cross it at several points.....and along parts of the river system. It's got camp grounds, picnic grounds in places and 'river access'.

Folks were at the Ponca Access landing – by the dozens – putting in kayaks and canoes and river rafts. I found a spot in the parking lot – nearby power line didn't help – and whipped off 99 contacts – all but a handful on CW. When I was running it, I didn't realize that to date, only 80 QSOs had been made by others from this park in 2 other activations! Otherwise, I'd just put it out on CW. The ARRL just put up 'real time' stats on park activations and how many QSO's made from each park.



N4CD at RV02
Buffalo National River

The SSB part of the band was busy – tried once but wound up on a frequency with a QSO I couldn't hear either end. Got a half dozen on SSB but that was it. NO cell service. Nada. Zip. Band congested with MO QSO party stations and regular weekend nets/QSOs. Band conditions still pretty miserable. Heck, 100Qs isn't bad. Turns out it more than doubled the QSOs made previously. The second operation apparently was QRP and only worked a dozen or two folks. Probably could have added another 100 if I could have found an 'open' frequency on 20M.

I checked the GPS lady. If I didn't spend more time there , I could be home by 8pm. Sounded good to me – that would be just about when it would get 'dark' at this point.

I wound my way down 50 miles of painful twisty turning up, down and around AR roads.....to I-40 – to Ft Smith AR – then over into OK and down US 69 to 75 to home. Same boring counties zipping by at 70-75 mph for 5 hours. Hit the Golden Corral for dinner in town....and home before it got 'real dark'. 970 miles in two days with six parks put out. Plan on spending at least an hour in a park – often 2 hours – plus of course sightseeing time, getting your Passport book stamped, signing visitor log and taking a picture or two. Or 10.

I'm working on getting to 100 park units this year. So far now up to 39. Lots more trips planned but those 'new' parks keep getting further and further from home.

Got Double Diamond transmit in most of the counties on the trip. Missed one or two run real early in the mornings. Thanks for the Qs in the park – gets me off to a good start when I can put 15 county hunter contacts in the log – guaranteed 'activation credit' – then on to the rest of the crowd.

Accidentally forgot to move off 14056.5 once.....wound up on net freq for 30-40 minutes with pile calling. Someone spotted on FB page. . Oops. Didn't intend to do that, but slipped up. Usually I move down to about 041 on 20M after a quick five or 10 minute run for the county hunters for the county I'm in , plus the park.

Still having fun! More trips to come! I need to slow down and spend more time at the parks – zipped through too many of them quickly. Then again, one civil war battlefield resembles another after you've seen 10 or 12 of them. Hi hi.

Mississippi QSO Party

Activity seemed down a bit. A few mobiles were missing.

K4ZGB mobile 170 cw QSO

Conditions poor. County rate much much lower than in my previous 9 years. Only made it into 11 counties. Tnx for following me around. The most worked were KS5A, LY5A, W0GXQ, DL3GA, DK3BN, W7GF, N2CQ, and KM4FO.

KN4Y - fixed FL 22 cw

Did not hear many stations on CW, not one mobile. But did make a contact on four bands for whatever that is worth.

K5DRI- fixed - 92 SSB QSO

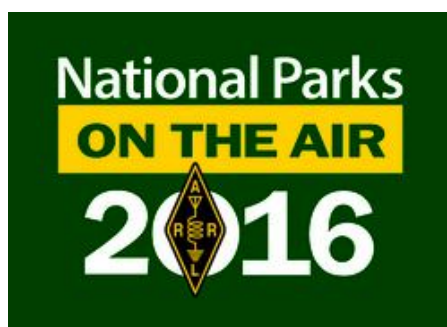
My very first contest!

ARRL – National Parks on the Air

In 2016, the National Park Service ([NPS](#)) will celebrate its 100th anniversary, and radio amateurs will be able to help mark the occasion with the ARRL National Parks on the Air ([NPOTA](#)) event. The event kicks off at 0000 UTC on January 1, 2016.

"As ARRL just celebrated our own Centennial, and Amateur Radio is often enjoyed in the great outdoors, it seemed fitting to devise a program to help NPS celebrate their own 100th birthday," said ARRL Media and Public Relations Manager Sean Kutzko, KX9X. NPOTA will run throughout 2016, with activity promoted and encouraged from each of the more than 430 official NPS administrative units and affiliated areas across the US. This includes all 59 National Parks as well as National Battlefields, Historic Sites, Memorials, Preserves, Reserves, Rivers, Seashores, National Scenic Trails, and other units.

The program will have two participation tracks -- Chasers and Activators. Chasers will simply attempt to make contact with operators in as many of the NPS units as possible. Activators will attempt to activate as many of the units as possible. NPOTA participants may serve in both roles. Chaser and Activator totals will be tracked via an online [Leader Board](#) based on LoTW data, just as was done during the Centennial QSO Party. Access the



NPOTA Leader Board directly at <http://npota.arrl.org>.

Modeled after the Mixed DXCC award, only one contact with any given NPS unit will be required, and no tally will be kept of NPS units based on bands or modes. NPOTA will be administered entirely through Logbook of The World ([LoTW](#)). *No* paper logs or QSLs will be accepted for NPOTA credit. Each NPS unit will be added to LoTW as a "location."

Chaser Award and Activator Award certificates will be available to any radio amateur who has at least one confirmed contact with an NPS unit or who activates at least one unit, respectively. A station's total number of confirmed or activated units will be printed on the certificate. The National Parks Honor Roll certificate will be available to any station confirming contact with at least 75 percent of the 59 National Parks *activated* in 2016.

While there is no formal partnership between NPS and ARRL for this event, the League has been in discussions with the NPS over the past year, and the National Park Service is aware that increased Amateur Radio activity in their parks is likely during 2016.

The NPOTA will use the official [list](#) of NPS Administrative Units and Affiliated Areas as defined and maintained by NPS. [Complete details](#) on National Parks on the Air are available on the ARRL website.

De N4CD:

Looks like folks who like to go mobile, go to national parks, make lots of contacts – might enjoy this. However, to make anyone happy with a contact, you must upload your log to LoTW. Otherwise, it won't count. Same if you work them from home or wherever if you want to get credit.

If you've never used LoTW, there's a little learning curve to get set up – but not bad.

Missouri QSO Party

This year MO went wild with the 1x1 callsigns. Lots for the call combo folks to chase. There were a few mobiles out and many fixed stations on the air for at least a few hours with the 1x1 calls. Most of the MO counties were on the air.

N0AX Mobile 853 cw 59 ssb

Surprisingly good results, given conditions overall. In years past we had lots of 15 meter QSOs and some on 10 but very little above 20 meters this year. Phone was pretty much not an option most of the time due to weak signals, so I just stayed on CW which seemed fine. Ellen drove about 690 miles hither and yon while I focused on operating - it worked well and maximized "butt in seat" time.

The gear was an IC-7000 driving a Little Tarheel II with a TargeTuner controller. This was *far* better than manually changing Hamstatics! That said, I was glad I had the set of Hamsticks when the screwdriver antenna quit changing length with about two hours to go. Luckily, 40 meters was quite good and the fixed-length whip worked great right up until the end of the contest.

We activated 24 counties (I think) finishing out with a big pileup of stations needing STG. Sorry I could have been there long enough to work the pileup down. I know there were some close-in folks that couldn't break that pileup.

Being on 40 so much of the contest turned out to have one bonus - lots of in-state stations were quite workable from beginning to end so our county total is up from last time. We also worked 45 states, missing only KL7, KH6, ID, MT, and ME. Hit the end points of Canada (NB and VE7) along with the average (VE3) during the trip.

Very successful adventure and plenty of stations to work and who wanted to work us. What's not to like?

73, Ward N0AX and Ellen KD0PES

K5ZZR mobile - 56 SSB QSO

Really enjoyed my first in-state MOQP... Russ

N0I (KI0I) mobile - 1014 cw 79 ssb

What a fun weekend! Luckily I had no troubles either car or radio. It was beautiful wx except for some strong winds. No T-Storms ! One hold up was being pulled over by a St Clair county deputy after I had sat in a parking lot by the Osceola Cheese Factory for about 45mins. He was coming over to see what I was up to and as he was coming across the highway I took off. He thought I was running away , but I explained that I had never seen him. Anyway ,after a check of my license for Identity and possible warrants ,WHEW!,he said be careful out there and I was back in action. Lucky , he drinks coffee with another ham in Clinton MO , who we both know so he had an idea of what hams are like, Half crazy hihi.

Thank you so much to all who rode along the entire weekend. I had so many multi-county worked stations I cant name them all, but some of the the top number of counties worked were ; N6MU with an amazing 80 qso's due to some quick band hopping, also W0S-39 ,K1RO-29, N4PN-28, WN4AFP-25, N0S(NW0M)-21, W0GXQ-20 and many others with more than a dozen hits in the log.

A lot of activity makes it fun and worthwhile to be out on the road for hours in these contests, and when things go like this one it's a blast. The bands were a little punky so it took some repeats for QSB and light signals.

Overall a great weekend and I'll be looking fwd to next year. Meanwhile , there's plenty more QSO parties to play in, Like Georgia and New Mexico this coming weekend .

Rig - IC-7100 100w to Hamsticks for each band, using triple magnet mounts, keying with Begali and a Winkeyer .

73 all and TNX AGN , Mark KI0I/N0O

N0H - Multi Op Mobile (W0BH N0LD AD0DX) 577 cw 653 ssb

This year we had a multi multi mobile on Saturday. Bob W0BH wanted to test out his new mobile AstroVan before his epic run in Ga to work 73 counties, so this was his warmup for Georgia.

Randy N0LD kindly offered to come to MO for the day and did most of the driving. We had a dedicated radio in the front for 20mtrs and the back radio was for 40 and 15. Most of the activity was on 40mtrs, unlike previous years when 15 when booming during the MOQP.

We were pretty busy during the contest and in hindsight could probably do more search and pounce to look for more multipliers. When I was running 40m ssb there were a few stations parked near the MOQP 40m freq and they were good steady qso's each time we changed counties.

Our Saturday route took us up north of Kansas City, then over through Amish country and then back to KC. We were parked at a county line in the country in Amish country and had a few Amish folks pass by with horse and buggy and give us some strange looks, but we just waved and smiled and kept making contacts.

We did go on a number of dirt roads, which is always a little risky when you're picking roads off of a map. But the weather cooperated and we had nice sunny skies and a good day was had by all.

We got back to KC around 5pm and then Bob W0BH and Randy N0LD returned to Wichita, and Randy to Oklahoma City.

I have a neighbor who had expressed interest in ham radio, and so I had asked him about being my driver from 7pm to 10pm (my son was flying in at 11pm so I had to be home for 10pm for the 45 min drive to the airport).

We just drove east to get out of Jackson county. We sat in a gas station parking lot and worked 40m ssb for a few hours. He was impressed that we could work both coasts and even Canada (VE4).

Sunday morning we drove south; my wife Cathy was the driver. We just went on highway 49, heading down towards Joplin and George Washington Carver National

Monument for a dual National Parks on the Air and the MOQP.

I worked mostly SSB from Carver and had some decent pileups, but conditions were a little slow. After the MOQP I tried to work a friend in VA on 18mhz and the band was dead. I also made some 30m cw contacts from Carver after the MOQP.

We had a great time during the 2016 MOQP.

Ron AD0DX

KC0MO - fixed - MO 432 cw 533 ssb

It was fun being the hunted for a change. Was able to generate nice pile-ups on 20 ssb. 40 was the right band for the multipliers. The mobiles were doing a good job activating some rare counties- Tnx to N0AX, KD0NEO, and a bunch of the 1x1 calls. I like using the QTH specific callsign in the state QSO party. Will activate it again in WPX. TNX to BEARS for sponsoring and to everyone for the Q's.

WN4AFP - fixed - SC 97 cw 46 ssb

Conditions were poor, but the mobiles had excellent 'ears'. Thanks to all the stations that heard my weak signal. Special thanks to all the mobile operators that could hear me too... My top three mobiles were N0O 25, W0H 16 and N0AX 14. I also found W0S for 15 Qs. It was a pleasure to work a few CWops - even on Phone. Thanks to the MOQP team for putting on another great MOQP! 73s Dave WN4AFP

N6MU - fixed - CA 162 cw 119 ssb

Conditions not the best. Seems like a lot of the action was on 40 during the day which doesn't help us left coasters. I'm sure I missed a bunch of counties as some mobiles never ventured to 20, especially Saturday. Maybe I just couldn't hear them, hi. Thanks to the mobiles that did spin the band button up and the hearty fixed stations who hung in there the whole time.

On the Road with N4CD II

In multiple parts.....the epic trip – on the way to the MI MINI.

The epic trip started with a short jaunt up the road to the Green Country Hamfest in Claremore, OK up by Tulsa. The car – a 2016 Chevy Malibu Limited - had been packed for 2 1/2 weeks of county hunting and park putting out, with priority for parks. I'd pass through a dozen states and loads of counties along the way. It was a Friday morning and all went well on the trip up to the hamfest. It starts on Friday afternoon, and goes through Saturday afternoon. It's usually a good one with lots of boat anchors showing up plus the normal flea market type stuff. Ran the counties on the way up – even though I'd run them a week or two ago. You never know who is starting over or wasn't around the previous time.

You usually don't run into too many county hunters up there – maybe 1 or two. This year I chatted with AF5Q – he had just run in the OK QSO Party – and put out two of the National Park units in the state including the challenging Oklahoma City Memorial site.



Ron, AF5Q

You'll find a bunch of people doing the State QSO Party thing, and also putting out a park or two while doing it – as Ed, KN4Y did in the GA QP and NM5DX did in the NM QSO Party. Bob, W0BH has done it too – a few times.

I didn't see much of interest – maybe NPOTA has taken over – but spent two hours checking things out – but nothing new to add to the collection and nothing I hadn't seen before. OK – it was a good stopping point. As Jerry, K5YAA noted – no reason to go there to find six inch pieces of coax with connectors attached.....

Stayed at the Microtel Inn there- decent price. Headed over to the Golden Corral in town for dinner. Waffle for breakfast then onward to KS and the first of the parks. There are five sites in KS plus some of the cross country trails headed west.

First up was Fort Scott Kansas

Fort Scott was built in 1842- was a frontier fort - in the Indian wars, protecting settlers. The frontier had moved further west and it was sold in 1855 - later it was again occupied during the the civil war. The city fathers lobbied for and got the railroad to the city - which triggered another war between factions who wanted and didn't want the railroad. The city grew up around the fort. It's on the eastern edge of KS.

It's a well restored fort - lots to see if you've never seen an 1860s US Army (Cavalry) Post. . Unfortunately in it is right in the 'downtown' with horrendous QRN on all bands so not a good radio site – at least from the parking lot for a vehicle. Maybe a portable set up with horizontal antenna would do better against the QRN from the power lines and industry all around. Otherwise a good stop to sightsee the fort.



Fort Scott KS

You can find information on all of the park units at the ARRL Web Page

<https://npota.arrl.org/nps-units.php>

which gives you links to all the NP sites – info on the site, visitor center hours, driving directions, etc, plus history about the park/site.

Next up was Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

Head a bit west now to the boonies of KS.

Tallgrass Prairie is in the middle of nowhere and nice to run - quiet. PV15. At one time there was 140 million acres of 'tallgrass'. Now there is 4% of that remaining. This 11,000 acre preserve helps keep what was once a vast tallgrass eco-system. It's surrounded by farmland.

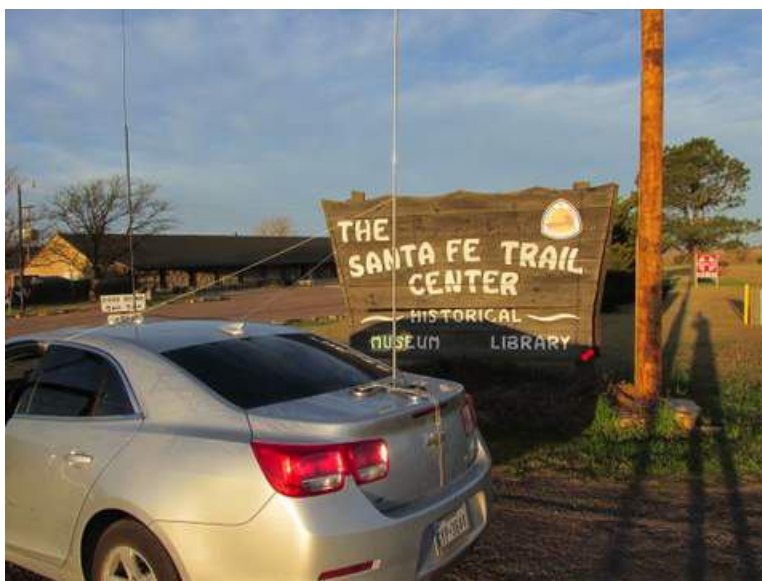


Tallgrass Prairie PV15

Did the usual park thing running it on 20/30/40 SSB and CW and on the county hunter frequencies. In most cases I could spot, or someone would spot me and the folks would show up. I had the 40M SSB antenna along. East of the Mississippi River – much of the park activity is 40m and you get back to VA/DC, 80% of the park activity is on 40M.

Then it was time for a couple hour ride west...out to cow country in KS. Mo mistaking the smell. Ah yes.....the smell of 'money' as a rancher would say. Phooey.

On the way there you pass a Santa Fe Trail Museum. It wasn't open at the time I was there but it might be an interesting stop if you catch it during operating hours.



Santa Fe Trail Center

It was getting late and I didn't know if the fort would have access after 5pm. Sometimes there are main gates they close and you can't get it. Time for dinner anyway so I stopped in Larned KS for the night at the Townsman Inn (rated well on TripAdvisor). Dinner at the Peking Garden buffet – not so great – limited choice but it filled me up.

Two parks given out, and a bunch to go as I took the 'long way' to get from TX to MI for the Mini. Slept well.

At a good park stop, you could work from 100 to 300 park hunters plus county hunters. If you had high noise, or it was real late or early in the morning, you might only get 30-50. To a large degree it depends how 'rare' it is – how many times it's been on, band conditions – time of day and day of week. There are at least double the number of park hunters on a weekend. If you are on SSB only in a poor location, you might struggle to get your 10 needed for official 'activation' credit. So far I've been lucky. Weather was good – warm.

Fort Larned is out in the middle of nowhere. Way back when – it was built to protect the Santa Fe trail – it was way out there on the frontier. Another Cavalry post. Of course, railroads and civilization later didn't need the fort so it's way outside the town now – you barely eek out a weak cellphone signal at times. Nicely preserved. Temp as in the 30s in the morning and the wind was howling. Not many visitors. It's hard to imagine what life was like,. Hotter than blazes in the summer time. Cold and very windy – constant wind- in the winter time. You had to be 'tough' to handle it.



Fort Larned KS – Protector of the Santa Fe Trail

It's a quarter mile hike from the parking lot to the visitor center - get set for a mile or more walk around the fort grounds. Nice operating spots. You can park in the 'picnic' area. No one around and picnic tables for those who operate portable or the main lot – all noise free. Not a whole lot of visitors - like 2 at the time I was there. Barely cellphone coverage - comes and goes. “Protector of the Santa Fe trail” - and you can run a 'two-fer' here since the trail comes here.

Next up – head north to the real boonies of KS -

Nicodemus - well, it is 'off the beaten path -was a frontier town settled by African Americans - a first. Founded in 1877 and folks from KY moved there. No one had run this historic site before. I'd be the first. Whoo Hoo! Guaranteed Pile Up!

I did some correspondence with the folks there at the visitor center. Also did the Google Street View and Satellite exams as well. There is no 'visitor' parking lot at the visitor center. However, there is a park adjacent to the visitor center (behind it) that the park

service owns/maintains. Several picnic tables are there for those who want to set up portable – and at least half the park activators do.

The park folks suggested I operate there. That would be a good spot for a portable operation but there is a bit of QRN from power line. The 'historic site' consists of 5 buildings that remain - among a few dozen other homes plus lots of empty lots. The best site, the former school, is on private property - if you could get permission from property owner it would likely be the best site to run - away from power lines. I arrived on Sunday and the visitor center was locked up tight. Not open. Behind the visitor center there are several spots for admin types to park. I parked next to a government truck. Some QRN but you could work most stations through it. Worked out fine. If you want to do this site, get in touch with the folks - and work something out. Still 'rare'. I think I was the first there. And only one as of publication date.



Nicodemus

The building to the left is the Visitor Center – also one of the historic buildings. For National Parks, you have to be 'on' park property. The sidewalk or street in front or around it doesn't count. No problem here – and if there is space behind the building you are set – otherwise the park area which they maintain, so that counts. This 'town' is miles and miles from anywhere. Good run! 276 QSOs.

Next up – head east to Topeka KS – a couple hour drive.

It was getting late - had spent a few hours each at Ft Larned and at Nicodemus working down the pileups. Stopped in Manhattan KS at a Super 8. Dinner at the Sirloin Stockade where I could get some veggies and fruit into the system. It's actually better than the Golden Corral. Slept well. I was getting a work out with the pile ups and driving between sites, plus, of course, putting out the counties in between.

Next morning it was off to Brown vs Board. This is listed as a 'sensitive site'. That means you should likely get in touch with the folks there ahead of time and not just show up. Not many had run this site before.

Brown vs Board of Education is a historic site. Back in 1953, there were separate classes in this school for white and black children. One Mr Brown decided to fight the system and file a lawsuit demanding that black kids get equal opportunity to the 'good' teachers and that 'separate but equal' should be eliminated. The case – titled Brown vs Board of Education – went all the way to the Supreme Court. In a landmark decision, the court ruled that 'separate but equal' was no longer the rule – schools must be integrated. This site is the school where the separate classes were being held. Now – it's a historic site as a reminder of the times.

You visit the NPS web site and they talk about a 'visitor parking lot' and sure enough, there's a gigantic lot in front of the school 200 feet away. However, the superintendent at the site says they do not own that, control it...even though it has park service signs there!. And it is used for geothermal heat for the school building. She said folks 'park on the street'. I did the Google Street View and Google Earth Satellite to see what was going on.

Oh well. I exchanged emails with Superintendent Sherda Williams. She noted there are several spots for 'staff' behind the school building and it would be OK to park there. I did. The downside is it is noisy and you look right into a multi-story building. (The parking lot 200 feet in front of the building is equally noisy! Checked it later. No joy – and it has a big ???? on whether it is 'legal' or not for NPOTA).

[If you visit the Little rock Central School in Arkansas, another NPOTA site- that was the first school that actually accomplished integration in 1956.]

Pic is from Street View of back of building where you can get permission to park on 'park property' in the admin parking lot behind the school. Not a great spot, but 'on' the site property. There is an alley way there – and a big power line. Did over 140Qs there.



Brown vs Board of Education, Topeka KS

Whew! That finished off the State of KS – five sites and one trail. There are more trails you can run in the state but I'd choose to run them at other places. More on that later.

Into the big State of Missouri!

Then it was off to MO to run a few sites there. AD0DX lives in the Kansas City area and mentioned two parks – one where you can run Lewis and Clark Trail TR09, and another for a 3-fer where you can give out 3 trails at once! TR7,11,14). He lives about a mile from a park where 3 trails crossed or ran together! For trails – folks expect you to be within 50 yards of the trail when you 'give it out'. Or at a place like a fort or park specifically for the trail that was a stopping point.

I hit the Lewis and Clark Trail first – they went up the river – following it for hundreds of miles as they headed to the vast northwest US – unexplored at the time by Europeans and white settlers. Easy – but not all that much in demand since thousands of contacts have been made. Got 58 Qs and that was enough.



Three Trails Park

Then went to the park – called the Three Trails Park – a mile from AD0DX's house! He can run it every ten days. For N4CD, the nearest park is 140 miles away from the home QTH! Worked out nicely – good quiet location – and good spot to run. Here you can put out the Oregon, California and Santa Fe Trails. If you want points to run up your score on the 'activator leader board' – run this every other day and you'll climb in the ratings – 3 at a time. You have to be out of the park for at least 24 hours to get credit for another 'activation'. I did my one time. Got credit for 3 – then headed on to the next. 35Q- Well run by AD0DX and dozens of others along the trails. These are the 'most run' sites of all of them! I'm not into climbing on the leader board with 'activations'. There is no NPOTA for total number of parks run, though. I might be close to the top on that one!

No time to rest – gotta keep a moving! So many parks – so little time!

Next Up – the Harry Truman Home and Farm site - NS-34. This is in two places – you can run from the main part with the visitor center – or you can head out to the farm house – which I did – closest in one from the 3 Trails Corridor park. Somewhat noisy in the parking lot – but almost no one around. One other visitor came by in an hour and a half. Filled a page in the log book then moved on. Not 'in demand' by any means. It's not far from Kansas City and the interstates. Spent an hour or so then left. Probably more effort would have resulted in more Qs, but this is an easy one to reach. I was headed toward never run or seldom run areas of the country!

The route took me north to St Joe, MO where the Pony Express route west started.

Civilization in the early 1800s ended at St Joe where the railroads and river traffic ended. 99% of the people in the country lived east of the river. It could take months for messages to reach the west coast from the east coast – either overland or around South America by ship. Innovative people got the idea of a relay system of stations and riders stretching from St Joseph MO to the west coast. There would be hundreds of riders and hundreds of horses. The horses would last about 15 to 20 miles – and the riders would then change to fresh horses and continue the route east or west. At some point, he'd hand off the mail bag to another who would continue it on along the route.

There were no bridges over rivers – you either took a ferry if one was available – not often, or you forded the river with the horse to get to the other side. Not only that but you at times had to contend with hostile natives and bandits.

The Pony Express had stables every 15 miles and if you head west to Maryville, KS you'll find half a dozen towns with 'stables' where the riders changed horses about every 15 miles. I stayed overnight in Maryville. Visited the 'historic stables' there. Every town along the route promotes it part as a touristy thing. Along the highway you'll see signs indicating this was the trail west with the Pony Express 'auto tour'. You can find all the trail crossings and parallels and in many cases, it is the very road you are driving on.

From St Joe, the riders took a ferry across the river, then began the ten day trip to CA. The Pony Express lasted about 20 months until the telegraph line and train tracks connected - putting them out of business. There's a Pony Express Museum in St Joe where the stables were and the starting point. It was an amazing system of coordination of assets over a vast untamed west half of the US. Good planning and good execution – but obsolete in under two years!



Pony Express Museum – St Joe, MO

If you want to run the Pony Express Trail near here...go across the bridge into KS. Downtown is full of QRN. But good sightseeing at the museum. Ran it two blocks away along the posted trail route – parked on side of road. Once you go over the bridge into KS – it's a lot quieter.

I stayed overnight in Maryville at a former Super 8 – now a Heritage Inn. Same building and still good place to stop. Headed on to the Wagon Wheel restaurant for 1/2 chicken dinner – very good. Slept well. Temp was 31 degrees in the morning. Weather good.

The next destination was in Nebraska at the Homestead Monument near Beatrice in Gage County. This is a site dedicated to the pioneers who 'homesteaded' much of the American west. If folks applied for, and got their grant of 160 acres, improved it and lived on it for a certain number of years – it became theirs. Life was not easy- you had little to start with and had to struggle for years to get by. Tens of thousands did do it

and populated the plains. Nice spot to run from – and one of the park chasers, KR0P came by for an eyeball QSO. John is President of the Lincoln NE club, is a pilot that flies everything from Cessnas to jets, and recently retired to his 'radio ranch' outside of town with big antennas and a big signal. It's nice to meet fellow NPOTA folks. (It's going to be amazing at Dayton this year!). We had a nice eyeball – and he made his first activation run using the N4CD mobile for a page of contacts! He was on the opposite side of the QSO for the first time. After 2 hours or so it was time to move on.



N4CD at Homestead MN – MN46 - 219Q

Now it was a long haul across most of the State of Nebraska – getting to the far west side once again off the beaten track. Hours and hours of driving at 70-75 mph on the Interstate – then up to Chimney Rock – out there around Morrill County. That site, one of the Associated Areas – usually sites run by a state or third party foundation – had only had about 50 QSOs ever made according the ARRL activations page. You can check to see how many 'activations' and QSO totals are listed for each of the 486* park units. {President Obama declared six new sites now eligible for park status – 3 already are done and 3 are in the 'works' – and might make it by year end}.

I got there late in the day. The visitor center was closed – it was 5PM but the lot was wide open – so I parked and ran the Chimney Rock AA05 for two hours. Nearly 300 QSOs into the log. My fingers were flying logging the contacts – nearly all on SSB. Whew. It was getting dark – and the motel was 18 miles further on. I had to stop....and promised the folks I'd be back in the morning. I'd cleaned up 'most' of those calling.

Whew! You hit a seldom run site, with good propagation – and you get a heck of a pile calling. I resort to going by call areas – there is no other way at that point with 30 or 40 calling other than going split – and that isn't fair to the other users of 20M. Maybe North Korea activation could do that, but not a simple park! Hi hi. The going by call areas seemed to work reasonably well, but a few just didn't understand I wasn't going to work a W6 when I was asking for 'Number Two' and kept generating QRM. There's always a few hassles and folks who want to make their own rules, or just don't hear well enough to get the gist of what is going on. You deal with it. 300Q in two hours – whew. New record for me. Propagation was good that evening – not the case for most of the trip.



N4CD at Chimney Rock AA05

So it was on to the town of Scotts Bluff for the night. Super 8 Motel and dinner at a Mexican place – the Rio – not far away. Had done enough driving and it was definitely dark outside. Didn't wander far.

In the morning I headed back to Chimney Rock. It's also a 'five-fer' as four trails head right on past it. You'll find, if you visit the visitor center, that the wagon trains rumbled by this spot – for 40 plus years. It was an outstanding landmark towering above the terrain and visible for 10 or more miles. Was at that visitor center a few years ago.

There's a sign I remember - "Stay on paved path – rattlesnake danger'.

I put another 100 contacts in the log winding up with 398Qs from Chimney Rock! Now what's a big strange.....just up the road Scott's Bluff had been run several times....and Chimney Rock was only 20 miles away! Just the way things happened I guess.

Now folks are supposed to give out the park units ID...not so bad on SSB – you're 59 for double A Five and TR7 8 14 and 15. On cw....I usually just sent the whole spiel every few minutes and the exchange was "599 AA5 4T" . Hi hi. Same at Scotts Bluff and at Fort Laramie – both Five Fers!

Well, time for a break.....so on to some other County Hunting/State QSO Party articles.
Continued in a bit.

SpotMe

Need quick spotting on the road?

Use the following link to access Spot ME:

<http://www.kw1dx.com/ch/spotme.htm?callsign=CALLSIGN>

Where CALLSIGN is your callsign. Example for KW1DX the link would be

<http://www.kw1dx.com/ch/spotme.htm?callsign=KW1DX>

Spot Me will then display a list of states to choose from, select the state you are in.
This will take you to the State Specific page

The fields on the page are as follows:

County: Dropdown list of all the counties in the state

(Note) A list of county lines follows the list of counties

Freq:Dropdown list of commonly used frequencies

Digital:If running digital will add a digital mode to the county selected

County:Actual county that will be spotted, filled in with the dropdown and can be modified

Freq:Actual frequency that will be spotted, filled in with the dropdown and can be modified

Mobile:Mobiles call, defaulted to your call from the URL

Spotter: Spotter call, please leave as Spot Me so that I see if it is being used
Next click the Spot Me button. This will make the spot through the W6RK Page. If you do not have the W6RK spot page up on one of the tabs in your browser then the W6RK spot page will be displayed.

Note: Register your call with KW1DX so it shows up!

New Mexico QSO Party

Yes, there was a NM QSO Party but activity was light. Most folks reported 6 to 10 QSOs. Several mobiles were out.

NS5J - Rover with KG5IDN - 45 ssb Q

Technical failure killed cw operation unfortunately.

KK6MC - mobile Multi-Op 266cw 41 ssb QSO

I had a good contest and managed to work the minimum 15 QSOs from each of the 10 counties I visited. I had no problems with the mobile setup. Conditions were OK and it was nice to work EU stations. Traveled 347 miles. Thanks to Ginger for driving, I would not have done as well without her!

73 Duffey

NM5DX Mobile 108cw 28 ssb Q

Activated four NPOTA units in four different NM counties -- Petroglyph NM/BER, Camino Real/SAN, Santa Fe Trail/SFE, and Pecos NHP/SMI. Got home before 6

o'clock but decided not to operate any more to avoid confusion ("What park are you in now ...?") Rig: IC706 + mag-mount hamsticks.

Thanks for the Qs.

73,

Scott K5TA

Joining in the Fun with NPOTA

If you go mobile (and most county hunters do!) you can join the fun of putting out the park units. There are two steps to the process. **Remember, contacts only count for everyone if you upload your logs to the ARRL Logbook of the World – LoTW.**

Of course, you can just work the parks for their counties - no LoTW required for that.

Step 1 – Register for an LoTW account

In order for things to be secure – so no one can tamper with credits for working stations – to keep out hackers – the ARRL LoTW uses a secure server and 'trusted computer' certificates to individual users who 'digitally sign' their uploaded logs. That means the logs only come from registered users and from the computers that have the 'trusted certificate' on them.

So...step 1 is registering with the ARRL. You go to the following site:

<http://www.arrl.org/logbook-of-the-world>

As you follow the instructions on this page, you'll download the TSQL program – Trusted QSL program.

The ARRL will then send you a postcard in the mail to your current FCC address with your password to log onto LoTW. You use this password to complete the account set up. Once that is done you are set for your 'home location' if you want to set that up.

When you go out mobile, you're not at home and will need to set up a separate 'station location' for each park unit 'activated'. That's pretty simple from TSQL. Just select add a station location – skip the first page, and on the second page, select the state – then you'll get a drop down menu for the national parks just below that. It shows the valid parks, trails, monuments, historic sites, etc in that state and the designator.

Once that is done, you are set to upload logs. You can use any program that exports an ADIF file. N1NN, N3FJP, etc. If you don't have a logging program or want to use it, you can type in the individual contacts into the TSQL file generator program, save it, and you'll have a file to upload. Time must be within 30 minutes for a 'match' to occur so when you are mobile you need to write down the time every 10 minutes or so in the log. You might have a 1 or 2 hour pile up calling you. You don't have to put the individual time down for each QSO. I update the time every 10 minutes or so.

You have several options to get that ADIF file. LoTW only takes ADIF files.

The TQSL has a ADIF file generator and you can type in every QSO one by one into it. You create a file that you name.....and it works, but painful to go back and edit it if you made typos. I use it because I don't log on the computer when out mobile. One option is to type things into your logging program when you get home, create an ADIF file, then upload it to LoTW.

Now, the important thing is when you upload via the TSQL 'upload' , you need to be sure to 'sign it' with the location from which the contacts were made. (you need to set up the 'station location' before you can upload a log). Let us say you went to Big Bend National Park – NP04. You must set up the station location for 'Texas and Big Bend' before the upload so you can select it as the location to sign it with. Otherwise, folks will get your home location and not be smiling.

Here's a brief tutorial on how to do it, and a video.

<http://ab4bj.com/wordpress/2016/01/quick-guide-for-uploading-npota-log-to-lotw/>

Using NFJP to upload

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YssKfTzHQ7I&feature=youtu.be>

Many already use LoTW for DX credit and other awards. Saves a lot of money for DX confirmations and nearly every DX-pedition uploads logs and all contest stations.

For county hunting – well, LoTW is useless. Confirmations don't count with CQ Magazine for the USACA award, many uploads don't include the county, and it is hostile to mobile operations where you zip through counties. It's good for DX, contesting, and other things, but forget 'mobile' and county hunting other than parks.

For National Parks on the Air – it's the only game in town.

- - -

Bob N8KIE, Darl, NA8W, Bob and Ann, KA9JAC/KB9YVT, Mike, NF0N, Mike KA4RRU, Kyle, WA4PGM Ed, KN4Y, Richard, W5IL, Rick, AI5P, Jim, N9JF, and others have activated parks. Join in the fun. (so have W0BH, AD0DX, AF5Q, and other state party type folks).

Georgia QSO Party

Lots of activity and lots of rovers/mobiles. Busy weekend! Mobiles included W4AN AD4ES, W0BH, KN4Y, N4N, W3DYA and K4ZGB.

From the 3830 reflector:

KN4Y Mobile 936 cw QSO

I went to the Redneck Auto Styling Emporium and had red clay sprayed on the side of the van to stimulate tobacco juice spit, and on both sides to indicate I am married. It helped, good band conditions On 20 and 40 meters, nothing heard on 15-meters. The pile ups were great, I also had a nice run at the National Park NS02. The weather was great. Worked 46 States and 4 Canada guys. I had planned to run 80-meters but was so tired by dark I did not change antennas. I think I am getting too old for two days mobile.

N4DU Rover 96 SSB

Well, we all know about the poor propagation, enough said.

First time ever doing Rover Multi-Op Low-Power Phone, we learned a lot and enjoyed the GQP again.

Thanks for the Qso's.

Francis N4UWS, Jim N4DU

W4AN mobile (KU8E, K4BAI) 1987 cw

Jeff, KU8E's, oldest son Andrew did a lot of the driving and navigating this year. Thanks, Andrew. We had minor problems with the car and an antenna and a short trip through TN on the way out of Dade County that reduced the operating time to about 19 hours. All of the lost time was on Saturday when we made only 857 QSOs in 47 mults. We well more than doubled the Saturday score on Sunday and added three more mults.

Band conditions generally were pretty good. We made only one QSO on 15M and that one at the request of DL3DXX. We got no other callers that one time on 15M and didn't go back because no one requested it and we had to stop and change resonators to go to that band. We plan to try

to install a third mast with 15 and 10M resonators on it so we won't have to stop to change bands in the FL QSO Party. 20M was a bit long (and we spent a lot of time in Northern GA that helped on 40 and hurt on 20). We didn't work anyone (except a few GA stations) on 20M closer than IL and PA.

40M was better than we have experienced it in recent years with QSOs out as far as IA and WI all through the day and DX QSOs with DL3DXX and UA3AGW in the late afternoon and evenings. 80M was quiet and there was a fair amount of activity there and we were surprised to work DL3DXX and K9YC on 80M. Thanks to all who participated in the GQP this year, especially the DX stations and the other GA mobiles. DX stations who immediately come to mind are: DL3DXX, UA3AGW, DK2OY, DL3GA, DL5ME, DK3BN, DM3ZF, HA3NU, HA8IB, SM6VR, SM7CIL, IK0MHR, OK1CF, ON4AAC, and HB9FBP. . 73 from all three of us,

John, K4BAI.

Rig: IC756ProII, 100W, Hustler mobile whips (with DX Engineering top hat on 40).

K4ZGB mobile made 401 CW QSOs - had no comments

W3DYA Mobile 831 cw QSO

I DID OPERATE FROM TWO COUNTY LINES, IN SPITE OF THE CONTEST RULES WHICH SPECIFICALLY STATED: "LINE SITTING IS NOT ALLOWED." I'M A COUNTY HUNTER, NOT A CONTESTER, AND WITHOUT A DRIVER I FIND IT CONVENIENT OCCASIONALLY TO OPERATE ON A COUNTY LINE. COUNTY HUNTERS LIKE COUNTY LINES AND DISLIKE SERIAL NUMBERS!

GREAT EVENT AS USUAL, BUT I WAS SURPRISED I HAD MORE CONTACTS ON 40M THAN 20M.

73, NORM, W3DYA

KD4BKS Rover 214 SSB

Saturday turned out to be a bust for me and the contest - we were going to start in Rome and do a quick six county swing after a memorial service at Shorter COLLEGE for one of my wife's former professors she really liked. Instead we went to dinner with two old classmate of hers - something that was important to her. By the time I fired up the rig it was after 20:00 local so we drove back up to the school an perched on the highest point in Floyd County and worked 17 stations before calling it a night.

This period also served a shakedown period for her new 2106 Town and Country that I had hastily wired up with power from the battery into the cabin Friday. We still have a few gremlins - at lower RPM levels my RF transmissions will randomly trigger the windshield wipers - but we survived. Throttling back to 75-80 watts usually did the trick, then when we were rolling I could increase back to 95 watts with no significant issues.

Another hair-puller was high noise levels that turned out to belong to the computer-radio CAT cable - a RS-232 M/F and a USB/Serial converter. I was locked on a single frequency the entire time, so it really provided no benefit and was easily jettisoned.

On Sunday we hit 18 counties, starting in Rome and ranging north to Summerville, Lafayette, and Ringgold then South to Dalton where we got on Highway 76 and traversed the top of the state all the way to Clayton. From there we turned south and came back to Roswell through Clarkesville, Cleveland, Dahlonega, Dawsonville, Cumming, Free Home, and Milton. My lovely chauffeur says we logged about 300 miles in just over 9 hours.

Special Shout-Outs to my two favorite stalkers:

AD4RE 15 of 18 counties

AC5O 12 of 18 counties

Yaesu FT-450D 100W

Hamstick

N1MM

2016 Town & Country

N4N - mobile - with W5JR N5ZZ WK4U - 1993 CW 15 SSB

Just finished the GQP, again using a pair of Flex 6300's. Two 10 hour non-stop days. It's really incredibly helpful to not have to have a radio faceplate fitted onto the operating "lap desk" (half a stair tread).

Had great weather, no traffic tie ups, vehicle worked great, radios worked great, no nav issues, and best of all, good fellowship.

Thanks to all of the stations working us as we traversed GA. It's pretty amazing to work Germany, California then New England in succession on 80 CW mobile with 100w. And we did it on 40 and 20 over and over. One station or the other was on 40m the whole time. Had hoped to reach 2000 Q's and 200,000 points. Both goals achieved. Could have gotten more mults on 40 SSB but the crowd never thinned on 40 CW.

~1000 total round trip miles, 51 unique counties.

Flex 6300 x 2

Flex Control x 2

Dunestar D600 filters x 2

USB-8 relay board x 2

USB Winkey x 2

Begali paddle x 2

Radiosport headsets x 2

Laptops x 2

12v supply x 2

UPS backup x 2

3G/4G router (gotta have onboard access along with connecting radios/computers)

Hi-Q 580 RT (80, 40, 20)

Baby Tarheel (40, 20, 15, 10)

Honda EU2000i generator

Garmin GPS x 3 with turn by turn loaded into driver GPS & county lines on operator GPS's

All RF hardware bonded together and to the vehicle. No vehicle noises. No need for NB.

73

Team N4N Rover

W5JR / Mike

KC4YBO - rover? - 318 QSO SSB

Sunday highlight was 56 Q's in CATO(Catoosa)first thing. Activating MP-01 Chickamauga Nat'l Military Park probably helped with the county count here. Was on the air 1hr 15 min, could have stayed longer and worked a bunch but had 7 more counties to go. Thanks to all who spotted me.

Rig was FT 450 into Tar Heel 200A. Radio was on a table in middle of mini van. This was my running rig. Also have FT 857 to listen for other counties.

Was fun way to figure out who was out there, then work them when I stopped in new county. Two way switch let me change radios quickly.

W0BH (with N4PN, N6MU, K0WHY) 3497 cw 416 ssb QSO!

Paul/N4PN, John/N6MU, Lorna/K0WHY and I couldn't think of a better way to spend a weekend in Georgia (well maybe Lorna could if we added bird-watching). The goal was to break our 2013 record of 61 counties, and 73 seemed like a nice, appropriate number. I mapped out a possible route and we were good to go. John flew to Kansas from California and drove with us to Georgia. Paul and his lovely wife, Martha, hosted all of us at their home in Macon.

I recently took out the middle seat and added a second station to the Astro van, and it tested out great in the Missouri QSO Party. Both stations are installed in milk crates and each included a radio, keyer, power booster, DC/DC inverter for the logging computer, band decoder, filters, and antenna switching.

Antennas were all Hustler verticals on four different mag mounts. All were tuned, so no tuner installed. Most equipment was powered from four big deep-cycle batteries.

John and Paul held down the rear station in tag-team format which operated 40/15 mixed mode. They made mostly 40m contacts and tried 15m in longer

counties with little success even though it was open at times. I operated the front station with 20 mixed/80CW. Conditions on 20 were poor until Sunday afternoon. I made lots of noise-level CW contacts anyway, but SSB was hard to find except for the quick-switch regulars. 80CW was a nice, loud, busy, surprise Saturday evening. We all wished the party started and ended sooner on Saturday, for mobile safety if nothing else.

Lorna did her usual masterful job of driving and held us to the GPS route and schedule on both 500 mile days. We successfully completed the 73 county run, and got close to 4000 contacts! We also made it back to Kansas safely, just missing the big storms to our south. As you might guess, there is much more to the story, but that will come out at a later time. So, to be continued ...

Afterwards

Thanks to SECC, SEDXC, and all involved who put on such an enjoyable QSO party. And to all of you who worked us and followed us along, we couldn't have done it without you! We had more than 100 contacts each with K9YC (68 counties) and W7GKF (66 counties), and we were astounded to work DL3DXX 97 times from 66 counties including contacts on 80m! Would we do it again? We certainly would. If we do, we hope ya'll will be there again for the ride!

73, Bob, Paul, John and Lorna

Stats

We operated 19.3 hours, 3958 combined raw Qs, 390 unique calls, 45 dupes, 3293 total miles from Kansas.

States not worked : VT ND DC HI AK UT WY

AD4ES multi op rover (with K9ES, KE4YGT N7RH) 1486 QSO 17 ssb

Two dual matching LP stations in vehicle: IC 7100 w/ auto tuners and 102" whips.

VE9AA 91 cw 38 ssb

I had a lot of fun in the W0BH QSO Party....Errr, I mean the GA QP !

I really only got on to play with my brand new IC-7300 and heard Bob CQing....he's a long way from Kansas and once I clued into what was going on, I was hooked. Wish I had started earlier.

Hard to be heard with LP from up here, but Bob has a knack with hearing me and even though I know I was weak, I only missed him in a couple counties when I was in the shack. WX was generally "good"

here so spent an hour here and an hour there in the contest chasing Bob and his cohorts on 20m and towards the end slipped in a few 40m QSO's

IC-7300 played well and there were times I was hearing better than on my Ic-7410.

Thanks Bob/W0BH & Crew and also AD4ES, N4N, W4AN and all the other GA stations.

73 de Mike VE9AA dit dit

N1CC- fixed TX - QRP 92 cw 46 ssb

Station: K3/100 at 5W CW and 10W SSB per rules. Force 12 C-3 at 64 feet. 80/40 Fan Dipole at 50' E/W broadside.

Saturday morning through mid-evening we had thunderstorms overhead, not a lot of rain, very frequent lightning and high winds. Was not able to operate until after 0100Z. Safety first. With 10 hours operation I am hoping the score is good enough!

I had decided to go QRP for this year, having won the Low Power Plaque 2-years in a row. With the decidedly poor conditions and reduced time that may turn out to be a "poor" decision. Most of the many mobiles heard me fine, and big guns at home too. I had not as good luck with the "average" stations with the weak signal from my end.

20 Meters (77 QSO) was the workhorse with results on 80/40 about the same for

61 contacts. 80/40 were too long in the morning Sunday as was 20 for the most part, later 20 improved, however, 40 meters was pretty useless until the last 2 hours of the contest ... normal skip just was not there for me.

I had fun, more work than planned and will be here next year - maybe not QRP.

Although there were spots on 160, 15, and 10 no signals were detected from GA.

W9RE - fixed IN - 189 cw...114 mults

The mobiles/rovers really, really kept this interesting. Saturday was cold and rainy so it was a good time to be inside. Missed a good 4 hours plus Saturday evening and missed another 5 hours Sunday. Had to cut grass before it rained again in the early evening.

W0BH (52), N4N (33), W4AN (15), AD4ES (14), W3DYA (10), KN4Y (7), K4ZGB (6), W4W (4). W0BH and W4AN had the strongest signals here.

Only Q on 30 was KM4DAY and surprised he heard me.

Thanks to the mobiles and rovers for the super effort.

County Hunter Net Turns 50

from Van WC5D

CW County Hunters Net turns 50 years on May 2, 2016!

K3WWP - John -co-founder has this link that describes in great detail about the first 2 years of the fledgling CW CH Net:

Link also available at countyhunter.com go to CW Operators tab and then dropdown menu History.

http://home.windstream.net/johnshan/ctyhunting_ss_chn.html

A 2nd link shows how the CW CH contest was the idea of the other co-founder WA8EOH:

http://home.windstream.net/johnshan/ctyhunting_ss_test.html

My recollections of those 1st days:

Paul W8CXS put out a new county in MI Parks every Saturday morning with plenty of callers for a new county and stimulated Saturday CW county hunting, I think. John K3WWP and Dave WA8EOH had been discussing a County Hunting Net operation.

I learned of this in a QSO on 4-18-66 with K3WWP and encouraged that he continue with the plan. I got a postcard in the mail from John that he would call the first net session on May 2, 1966. In the mean time I'd been monitoring & checking into the traffic handling net for Maryland & Delaware (MDD) with one of the NCS Andy K3JYZ later W3XE.

The big day came on Monday May 2, 1966 on 40M CW 7035.

I scurried home from High School and checked into the 1st ever CW County Hunter Net session run by K3WWP at 1854Z and stayed on until 1958Z. The next 3 days WA8EOH was NCS, along with K3WWP with much later sessions. I think he began about 2300Z. Somewhere in those first 3 days, I volunteered to be NCS for the 1st ever

Saturday session for May 7th, 1966 1400Z

So, loosely based on traffic handling, I asked for QNI and just called "CQ County Hunter Net All Welcome". A few check-ins was all.

Second weekend 1430Z had 16 check-ins and several visitors handed out their counties. It was a fun summer being NCS on Saturdays, participation grew, until I went off to college. CW mobile was almost non-existent, so everyone was encouraged to bring stations to the net to give out their county, along with my solicitations with All Welcome.

Amazingly enough, many youngsters and young adults, way back in the 60's and early 70's that were interested in CW county hunting are still around today.

Here is a few that come to mind, sorry if I missed you –

K0DEQ, W9MSE ex-K0WNV, W8WVU, W0GXQ, W3DYA, N9QS, WB2ABD, K8IW ex WA8JDW, K1BV ex K1GUD.

John K3WWP moved on from County Hunting to CW QRP and "The Streak" among other "All CW" activities and remains very active daily. Explore his website.

This "County Hunting" thing has been a thread on & off in my life, I've enjoyed it immensely, co-existing along with many of my other interests.

We have a come a long ways since those humble beginnings!!

73 & GH

Van

WC5D ex-KL7HNN & K3ZMI
USA-CA 1092 All CW #71

On the Road with N4CD III

The adventure continues on the way to the MI MINI County Hunter Get Together.

The windshield is cracking on the Malibu. A small stone hit right at the edge of the glass, almost invisible, has decided to start a crack across the windshield. It's growing about an inch a day. In the morning, after heading back to Chimney Rock for an encore, I give a call to several local glass replacement folks in Scott's Bluff. Dang – turns out that since I have a new model car – with a unique window – replacements are hard to come by and take five days to get. I'm not going to sit around for five days and the crack hasn't grown yet across the area I see through. However, I do arrange for Safelight to ship and arrange an install in Traverse City – when I get to the mini. That's a week away. No problem, right? The bad news is that only the OEM replacement window is available and it is \$900. Ouch! Double ouch! Well, it needs a new windshield.

There's parks and counties to run. Next up is Scott's Bluff – a monument dedicated to the pioneer trails. It's another five-fer – the monument plus the 4 trails that run through it. Nice visitor center and you can drive up on the bluff(not 5-fer there). Band conditions were really bad news but I put over 100 in the log from here. It had been run several times before. The trails ran up through a gap in the hills – and you can see still the ruts as the wagons struggled. Each wagon typically hauled 2500 lbs of provisions when it started out – plus of course the weight of the wagon itself. Most of the people walked most of the way to their destinations along side the wagons.



N4CD Scotts Bluff NE

Next up was Fort Laramie WY (Goshen County) – just over the border into WY – also on the trails. It too was a frontier fort built to protect the trails, keep peace with the Native Americans, and round up bandits and hoodlums. I was putting miles on the car but the fun was continuing. I was on a mission to put out as many as I could, with at least an hour and usually 2, sometimes 3, at each park.



Fort Laramie WY

Most of the forts are in nice quiet radio locations – out in what is now the boonies.

OK...as was as far west as I planned to be. Now to head toward a never run park – so I backtracked into NE, then headed up a very lonely road to Agate Fossil Bed Monument. I lucked out – I was zipping along a few miles over the 60 mph speed limit. I come over a hill and the local Sioux County NE constable has a car pulled over. Whew....might have been me. No cars for miles – but the local cop is generating income for this sparse country with only 2 paved roads – hi hi. Later I see the car come into the parking lot for the monument. This site has never been run before so the pileup is humongous. Band conditions are still bad but over 200Qs go into the log.

This site has fossils from 20 million years ago. No dinosaur bones as they disappeared 65 million years ago, but small mammals. I was so busy putting out the county I lost track of time. Looked at clock and it was 4:20 – figured I'd better hustle inside to see the visitor center – but then the nice lady ranger came out and came by the car and asked if I'd been sitting there a while. Said yes – and she said 'You know the visitor center closes at 4pm?'. Dang....well, missed out on that – having too much fun. I'll have to go back one of these years! Missed getting my passport book stamp. Got the pic to show N4CD was there.



N4CD Agate Fossil Bed - NE

You are really, really out in the boonies here. I finish up running the park/county and decide it's time to head to a motel in Lusk, WY – the nearest town headed to the north. It's a small detour back into Niobrara County - WY. America Best Value Inn (\$75) and dinner at the Triangle Cafe and Steakhouse – Lemon Pepper Chicken – very good!

Temps are good – warm afternoons – and weather clear. I lucked out so far on the weather. Meanwhile back in TX – rain, more rain and storms.

Thursday I headed north – through Weston, WY. Gene, K5GE always seemed to be around to work me for Double Diamond. Think he is planning on being the first done!

I'm headed to the Black Hills of South Dakota with 3 parks you can run. This is the area where we had the National Convention in Deadwood, SD a few years back – hosted by Leo, WY7LL (SK) and WY7ML. If you went, you'll recall we went on a group tour to Mt Rushmore, Crazy Horse (not a NP), with lunch at Keystone. I went past the road to Crazy Horse – that's an even large rock sculpture than Rushmore – but still in the works.

First up was Jewel Cave. Needed by many as only a few QSO's made from there. Found a nice spot not far into the park to run, but did visit the visitor center, sign the visitor log and get a Passport book stamp. These are some spectacular caves – and you can take guided tours (reserve ahead of time) through them. The NP web site has loads of information on them and if you do a Google images search you'll find lots of pictures of this and the next cave system.



Jewel Cave SD

Not far away is another fantastic cave system – Wind Cave – after a good run at Jewel, - 100 Q spite absolutely miserable A and K indices, the route heads to Wind Cave. Again, you can arrange to take ranger led tours through the cave system.



Wind Cave SD – Black Hills

Now it was on to Mt Rushmore. I did the close up bit, and the parking for this place is a private concession that wants \$11 to use their parking lot. No thanks! Saw it with the group tour a few years ago – close up. I headed east just a bit and ran it at the entrance to a campground. Not perfect, but this site – since it's a major attraction – has had many 'activations' so far – so no need to go all out here. Just 54Q – not many takers and rotten band conditions. There were more sites to run! So many parks, so little time. I need a flying saucer or something that can zip between parks at 700 mph! Heh heh. Rumor has it Obama is trying to figure out how to get his face up on the mountain side after he leaves office. Good luck.



Mt Rushmore - SD

There was still time left in the day to run another park or two. I was at least now headed the right direction – east – to get to the Mini! I zipped on down the interstate to a park you've probably never heard of! Me either until this National Park fun started in Jan 2016. Ever hear of Minuteman Monument?

Way back when in the Cold War with the 'Evil Empire' the US built missile sites all over the north part of the country. One of the missiles used was the “Minuteman” capable of carrying nuclear weapons as a counter strike. The sites were buried in the ground and controlled by a center point for the local system of several launch sites. Now there's a missile silo you can visit – D9 – plus the launch control room - and a visitor center. First up as you drive east is site D9. The fence was closed up as I got there – late in the day – and not much to see. You can walk around the fence to see a bit more. You're on government property even outside the fence. - they had a square mile or two to protect it from intruders – and it likely was 'shoot to kill' back then if you didn't quickly cooperate. This site is only a mile or so off the Interstate.



MinuteMan D9 Launch Site

The weather was now a bit rainy – and cloudy – but time to move on. Still hours of daylight! Off to the main visitor center a couple dozen miles further east – the direction I needed to go.

The visitor center closes at 3pm. Location is right off the interstate – not even a mile. How many have driven right on by it? I got there after 3pm– the main gate into the facility said 'closed' but there were 20 cars or more in the lot. 400 feet down the road was another unclosed entrance into the parking lot. N4CD zipped in and ran from the visitor center parking lot. Likely the admin types had to work till 5pm! Hmm...this arriving too late to see things has got to stop. I can't get the park stamp if they are “closed”! Closed is a relative term as we'll find out later.



MinuteMan Missile Site - Center

There was still daylight and the Badlands National Park was 10 miles south at the same exit off the Interstate. Headed south for a quick run there. Many have run that so need for an all out effort. I'd be happy to get my '10' for activation credit but I'll work all the comers I hear on the various bands and hit the county hunter frequencies as well or spot myself. Forty-six QSO's went into the log from there. Just pulled a 1/2 mile into this big park – ran it and bugged out. Time to find a motel!



Badlands National Park - NP03

I headed east on the Interstate - and found another former Super 8 down the highway – now an America's Best Value Inn. (\$78). Not much else in this small town but a few sit down restaurants. Had dinner at the Club 27 Steakhouse and Saloon. Expensive. Either than or Tex-Mex or 'fast food' at a Sonic or similar. Slept well. I was ahead of schedule. No need to get to MI early since the rest of the folks wouldn't be there till Thursday of the coming week. I had another week of county hunting and park putting out.

OK...what else can I do? There were still detours to take and in the morning the car headed south. What? That's the wrong direction but I could get two more parks by going back into NE.

There are several types of parks. You've got the big ones – the name National Parks like Yellowstone and Big Bend, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Acadia – there are 59 of those. One is in Guam, too. Then there are national monuments, Memorials and historic sites – from the Washington Monument, Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials in DC, the WW2, Vietnam and Korean Memorials in DC, President Clinton Birthhome, LBJ Ranch. Etc. You've got 'historic places' like Keweenaw MI for the copper mining industry. And then there are the 'wild and scenic rivers' and the trails. The one exception to what you can mobile are the Scenic Trails just as the North Country, Ice Age, Appalachian type trails. If it has 'scenic trail' in the name, these cannot be run from a vehicle.

Just into NE you find the Niobrara Wild and Scenic River. It had not been run too much so it would be popular. I headed to Valentine NE in Cherry County – and you go about

5 miles east and find a boat launching ramp. Well, it's actually for kayaks and canoes since you don't want to be in a power boat in this river – at least here. You turn into the river area, cross over it – and find yourself headed into a Buffalo Preserve. Hmm.....was that the 'river' I just crossed? Well – distraction – buffalo on the road meandering across. I waited till they were well out of the way. A mile further on was a visitor center for the Buffalo Preserve area – and I could get the Wild River stamp there too. Did and headed back to the river – took a short dirt road to the boat ramp and operated there. For rivers, you must be 'on the water' or within 100 feet of it to count for the NP contacts.



Out the front window – 1500 lb buffalo
Buffalo has the 'right of way'.



The Niobrara Wild and Scenic River WR06

The car is about 60 feet from the water – paced it off just to be sure. 132 QSOs from here.

I still had to head east and way north to get to the Mini. A few hundred miles east – NE is a big place – you can run another river system – The Missouri River system – a couple hundred miles of Wild River between SD and NE - WR05. I headed to a boat ramp in a park – and ran it from there – probably less than 70 feet from the water. Paced I off once again. No one was around – it was a cold dreary day. This was a steep boat ramp and you better believe the parking brake was hauled way up tight to make sure N4CD didn't go submersible!



Missouri River RV04 – Gregory SD

Now it was time to find a motel for the night. Stopped in Sioux Falls SD at a Super 8. Dinner at Perkins. Slept well. So far the trip was going well. The car, other than the crack in the windshield, which had stopped spreading, was doing fine – getting about 30 mpg including the hours long stops with engine idling.

Turns out Lewis and Clark came up along the river so you can run the Lewis and Clark Trail along here too – TR09.

Next morning it was off to Pipestone MN not far away. What did the folks do to get a National Monument here? Turns out this area had great stone for making pipes! To the native Americans – who used the pipes for prayer and religious ceremonies, this was 'holy ground'. Close to 100Qs went into the log. All these QSOs would have to later be typed into LoTW – from paper log to cyberspace. That's why it's a National Park unit these days - one of a handful in MN.



Pipestone – good operating spot in lot - MN61

As a mobile, in most cases, I just pulled into the visitor parking lot and proceeded to put out the park. Usually I parked way away from the visitor center. Many of them have a/v equipment to show a movie and the last thing we hams need is having RF wipe out their video show or come over their PA system! Plus you don't have cars next to you messing up your radiation pattern! Hi hi.

I was back on course headed northeast toward the upper peninsula of MI – over the top and down to Traverse City. So many parks – so little time – well, I was actually ahead of schedule.

Minnesota has just a handful of parks. One of the big activators there – W0IS, and I exchanged a few emails and he gave me tips on where to run some of his favorite spots. Right around the Minneapolis/St Paul area you have the Mississippi River Recreation Area – RV04. I didn't want to head into the city mess, so I'd try just north of the city in Anoka County at a boat ramp indicated on the map. Dang. Turns out that boat ramp was closed for the season and couldn't get anywhere near the river. It took me 20 minutes of heading north along the river but with subdivisions and houses all along the river and no way to get near. Finally I found a spot at the end of a road where I could be within the 100 foot limit and park! Richard, W0IS, came over for an eyeball and we worked each other on 2M (yep that counts) to each get credit for the park. So far he has not been able to catch anyone there right in his backyard for park credit!



W01S at the RV04 River

He runs a low power portable set up for his activations of the MN and WI sites.

N4CD was on a roll.....next up was another Wild and Scenic River – this time the St Croix River. I was headed to the Ice Age Preserve – where I could do a 'two fer' with the river....but passed over a bridge and saw a fantastic spot to operate from right below. I circled back and just ran the River late, late in the day – 2216Z... I'd make a quick run.....well, that was at least 100Qs before I got out of there and I'd be back in WR09 again tomorrow!

Stopped at a smaller motel – the Valley Motel in Dresser, WI. Dinner at the local Pizza/Family restaurant – right down the street. Very good. If you head here now, RESERVE ahead of time. This is touristy area and come tourist season (beginning now) things are highly booked up! Got their last room and that was from a call at 2pm in the afternoon as I planned ahead. This is prime kayaking, canoeing and hiking territory.



St Croix National Scenic Riverway – going west

Next morning I headed over to the Ice Age Preserve Area – AA11 – one of the Associated Areas in the park system. You can run this at Interstate park – which is a state park requiring you either pay a daily use charge, have an annual state park pass, or have a National Parks Pass (senior or other). You enter and there's a sign saying “Self Register”...no one at the gate. I'm confused – look at the form and no where to check off for National Park Senior Pass holder. Sort of fill out the form and drop it in the box below.

I head down and down to the river – find a nice spot within 100 feet of the river at a parking spot – probably as far from the main entrance as possible. This is a fairly large park – but it is mostly deserted at this time of year (mid April). In season it would be crowded with tourists, campers, river riders, swimmers, etc. Here I can put out the Ice Age Preserve – AA11 – and the River – WR09 as a 'two fer'. While I'm operating away, the ranger stops by and asks for my park registration. I mention I have a National Parks pass – he'd like to see it. All is fine. He mentions that you should leave it on top of the dashboard where folks can see it....otherwise you could get a ticket. I do....right in front of the GPS Lady....so I don't forget it. I ask about where I can set up and run the Ice Age SCENIC trail. That's one you have to run portable – cannot run from a vehicle. He mentions two spots.

The trail actually runs along the main road before you turn it – it's even paved there – but there is no place to park. One parking lot is right at the trail head and that's where I go next.

The intent is that you should reach these SCENIC trails on foot. So I do.....but not far. I'm not a hiker. I have the portable set up from the first activation of the Clinton Home in Hope AR. It's a Yaesu FT-817ND with an Alex Loop on a small tripod and a Li FE P 20 AH battery which weights about 3 lbs. I carry it 100 feet just to get into the 'spirit' of the scenic trail bit. I put out the Ice Age Trail TR05/AA11 two fer and make enough contacts for credit..16 in the log. QRP with not so great band conditions is not always fun. Hi hi. Pack up and head on to the next destination.

The Alex Loop goes into a bag about 12 x 20 inches and weighs about 2 lbs. You can assemble it in a few minutes. Frequency coverage is 40-10m and it does quite well on 30 and 20m. 40M is a bit tougher. I made over 200Q when I operated from the Clinton Home with it.....conditions were better and I was the first activator there. TR05 has been run many many times now. Thanks to those who called me – even though the probably didn't need it. Got my credit for activation. (need at least 10).





N4CD portable QRP setup

I'm getting closer to the mini site now. Just a few more parks to go! Yeah! But I'm having fun seeing the various parks. 90% of what I ran this trip I never heard of before. How about you? It's been an education and lots of fun with the travel. So far the weather is good, the car is cooperating, and the radio working fine – other than not so fine propagation at times. There were some NEW parks that no one had been to yet! Those are really fun if you like pileups and they can be intense. By this time, other than Alaska and hard to get permission to run places like the White House, Ford Theater in DC, one Native American sacred site off limits....there's not many left that haven't been run.

Well, Apostle Islands in the Bayfield WI neck of the woods had never been activated. Virgin territory and that was next up. This park consists of two parts – islands off shore and a lakeshore part. There is a visitor center/admin office in the city of Bayfield itself. But it is miles from the actual park. Some were talking about 'bending the rules' a bit. The rules say you can run the park from a visitor center/parking lot. If – a big if, the park service owns/leases and maintains the parking lot. That is usually the case but not always. I checked out the visitor center. No one around. Dunno if they owned/maintained the lot, but heck, the actual park is only 15 miles ahead....but lots of small towns.

Here N4CD almost collected an unwanted souvenir. There are half a dozen small towns and many have a 20 or 25 mph speed limit. The road is twisty and turns as you go up and down small hills. I come around a curve just as I see a 25 mph sign. I'm doing 35 and slowing down....but it isn't fast enough.. Oh, darn. There's the police car...and sure enough he got me.....the lights come on.....I pull over.....and await my fate.

The officer comes up and asks for the license and insurance info, which I have already dug out of the glove box. He asks how I'm doing and I reply "I was doing fine but hope I'm not about to get my first speeding ticket in 35 years. He asks how old I am...tell him I'll be 70 in June. He says that's a pretty good record.....and decides to give me a warning.....if there are no wants and warrants out for me. I assure him there sure shouldn't be any. He goes back, runs the info...and comes back and gives me a 'warning' today and says 'hold it down'. Whew! Close call. I've been lucky so far....most of the time I'm zipping along at 3-5 over...and more in the real boonies. Well, I won't want to ruin my luck so I'll just do the speed limit or a few over for the rest of the trip.

I get to the actual Park for Apostle Islands and quickly put 150Qs into the log. Good run considering the band conditions. Good places to run at the beach areas – big lots – almost no one around.

This is one of the 4 National Lakeshores – they start with LK



Apostle Islands LK01

Time to head east. I'd been on the road for a while – time to get to a place to rest – Traverse City where the mini would be held.

Now somewhere along in here.....the car got hit by a deer.....it's a strange thing...I saw the deer...he was walking on the right side of the road.....I slowed down and moved as far left as I could. He continued to just saunter along. I don't know what he was thinking. I kept on eye on him. All of a sudden, he decided he wanted to be right in front of my car, prancing along. That doesn't work too well. I slammed on the brakes, left a trail of rubber, and hit him at maybe 10-15 mph. I came to a stop. Pull off road. The deer was behind me....trying to pull itself off the road with back legs that no longer worked. I looked at the front of the car. Hmm....headlights OK...no damage to metal. Everything still running. Nothing leaking out of front of car (radiator). Looks like I got off easy. Some deer hair in the front grill. Thank my lucky stars that it wasn't worse. Turns out the deer did some damage to the plastic grill – good ole GM structural plastic.

Well, the car seems to be running fine. Nothing hanging out or hanging off. My last deer hit in MO about 12 years ago took out the front windshield...never saw that one coming or going.....first day of hunting season. That disabled the car until the windshield fixed the next day.

I stopped in Ashland, WI at a Super 8. Ashland Family restaurant for dinner. Both good.

Next morning it was cold and rainy. Yukky weather. I was way north. 100-200 miles south it was 50s and sunny. Next up was Keweenaw Historical Park – near Keweenaw County but not in it. This park is dedicated to the copper mining industry. It's in two parts...lower part called the Quincy unit...and the upper part 10 miles north. With my planning I figured I'd go till I found one of the building sites and run it there. I wandered north and saw a big sign – Quincy Mine – Keweenaw Historic Park – I found it I think. It was misty, miserable 39 degree weather with 300 foot visibility. Got out, took picture of sign in the rain.....and wondered where the actual mine was. Hmmm...



I wandered down the road I'd pulled in on.....spent five minutes with nothing in sight. Came back out and saw the 'Mine office' on the other side of the street. Zipped into the lot – and saw a sign 'Closed". For mine tours go up the hill to the mine. Duh! OK.....Sure enough if you looked 'up the hill' along the main road through the fog and drizzle there stood out the mine – the hoist building and other buildings. Zipped the half mile up there – pulled over and had a good run from HP20. The weather would stay cold and damp for most of the next five days.



Quincy Mine

In the summer months, you can take the mine tour here. Probably interesting but all shut

up in the 'winter months'.

That night I stopped at the L'anse Motel in L'anse MI. Small town but I was getting worn out, the weather was miserable..... dinner at the Hilltop Restaurant – good. Slept well. The days on the road were finally getting to me. Only a day or two to go! Plus one 'un run' park and another virgin park on 20M. Fun fun fun!

Next morning it was over to Pictured Rocks Lakeshore - LK03. Nice park and folks were playing tourist here. Weather was chilly but the sun peeked out. This had been put out during the MI QSO Party but only on 40M. That left out a lot of the country. Whoo-Hoo- 150Q quickly went in the log.

Stopped by the visitor center – which really isn't in the park – got my stamp, signed the visitor log....and then headed to the actual park. Some might run the park at the visitor center...but since the park is only a few miles further on – head there and run it....same place the MI QP folks ran it a few days before!



Pictured Rocks Lakeshore

The weather was cool – but the sun came out and I got inspired to put up the portable set up and run the North Country Trail again. It runs right up along the shore in this park and at the Munising Falls parking lot, you can set up right at the trail head as it crosses the parking lot. This would be the first activation of this trail for me.



North Country Scenic Trail

Made 11 Qs with help from friends. Again, this has been run to death...conditions weren't good – and the further north you get, the flakier propagation seems to be. Got credit for an activation. It's a big difference from the operation of the mobile to the 5W QRP operation with the less efficient loop antenna. Packed up and headed out once again. One more 'park' in the portfolio.

Still, I was having fun....and seeing new things for the first time. This was a good break from county putting out trips. I'd been to all the counties at least twice.....and I don't think there will be a 3rd time for all of them. I keep track. Still, I'd be running all the counties in between the parks as I zipped along.

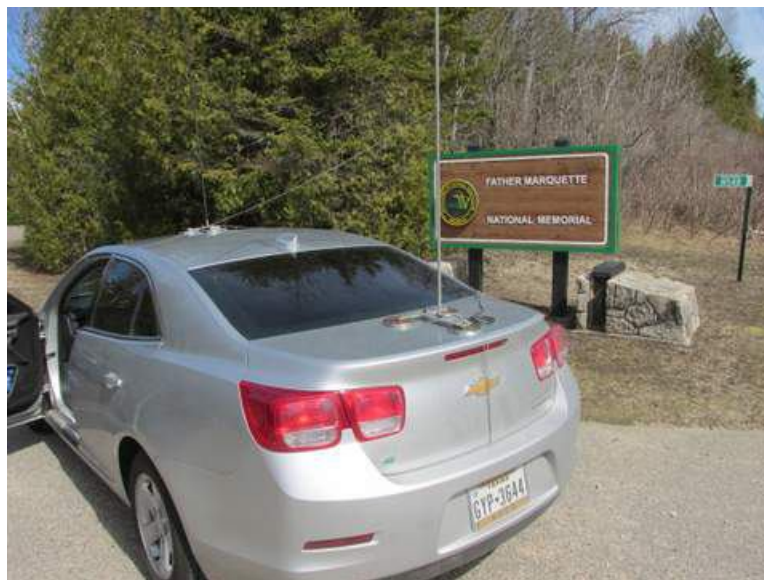
Next up...was virgin territory – the Father Marquette Memorial. The state web site – this is a state run monument/park.....says it opened April 1. The NPS page says it doesn't open till May 1. Guess I'd find out. I'd be going right by it on the way to the Mini. Just before you go over the big bridge between the two halves of MI....you find the Father Marquette Monument. The sign says 'closed'. There are two barricades across the road but space for a vehicle to pass through. Sign also saying MI Park Pass required – but no one around to sell me one. Well, time to investigate. About a mile down the road are several giant parking lots. I just park...and run the county – whoo-hoo....200 go in the log quickly. I don't know if I'll get booted out or in trouble for being there.....but - no one shows up. After two hours, I figure I'd pressed my luck far enough. Head on out to a local motel...small tourist place of 10 units. It's chilly outside – 40s. At least the sun has been out. Sunset Motel \$46 in St Ignace. Dinner at the recommended 'The Truck Stop'. Good. Took a while for the single baseboard heater in the room to warm it up.

No breakfast at the motel so hit the Truck Stop again for breakfast then headed out to the Park HQ building two miles down the road and went in to get the real scoop on the Father Marquette Memorial. Talked to the nice ranger and mentioned that the state web site said it was open from 4/1. He said no – not open.....and I mentioned I'd like to go in and make radio contacts. He asked 'are you with the lady'? Hmm? No?

He then went on to mention a lady had asked permission to set up a small tent (the kind you see at hamfests) and set up equipment and antennas for an operation. He noted that would take a SUP (Special Use Permit) and they require a million dollar liability policy for things like that. Guess they are worried tourists would trip over the coax or an antenna would fall on top of a tourist head. That operation didn't happen. Might take some intervention from ARRL to get past the liability policy which is almost always waived for 'amateur' (non commercial) operations. I just mentioned I wanted go 'on park property' and transmit from my car.

He said – well just go right on in – past the barricade. No problem. No hassles! But....you need to have a MI Park Pass and the NP Pass doesn't work. OK...I quickly fork out \$9 and get my pass. Then I go back to the park and put another 100Qs into the log! Are we having fun yet?

I posted a note on the NPOTA Facebook page....and Bob KA9JAC and Ann, KB9YVT head here the next day or two and also put it out! Two operations from a previously unrun park.



Father Marquette Monument AA07

That turned out very well. Turns out you could actually run the park from before the barricade if you were squeamish about going beyond. The MI website has a great map and as soon as you turn off the main road you are on park property.

I sat the second day for two hours and the only vehicle I saw was a green and white Border Patrol SUV circling the lot and leaving. Hmmm....illegals coming in this way?

Now it was time to head to Traverse City and see about a new windshield and check out the deer damage. Turns out on second look the deer broke off a piece (2x4inches) of the front main plastic grill. Also crunched the lower grill with a small piece missing.

I get to Traverse City and check in to the former Super 8 which is now a Boarders Motel. Stayed there last time too – last year? I was a day early and it's half the price of the Holiday Inn..and likely no one would be there yet.

Safelight calls....seems they screwed up.....the windshield they ordered 7 days ago never arrived in Traverse City..it will take another five days. Duh! I'll be gone. However, the good news is that if I go get it replaced in TX, they have 'after market' windows ...and they are half the price – under \$400 installed vs \$900. OK...I can wait to save \$500. The crack has stopped growing but a crack has started now from the right side.

I went over to the local Chevy place...bad news.....\$580 in parts – for those two genuine 'structural' plastic grills....plus 2 hours labor to put them in! Ouch! That could wait till I get home in TX. I'd get some other estimates. Maybe there would be 'after market' pieces. Turns out my 2016 Malibu limited has 'limited' parts availability for things like this – so far.

Well, there was still time so I headed over to Sleeping Bear Dunes.....time to get another park in the log – LK04 – only 20 miles west of the Traverse City Mini site. Zipped across highway 72, found the visitor center – got my stamp and signed visitor log...and then went few miles to the actual park. Did OK but this has been run many times too – no first time activator rush with hundreds calling – hihi. Put over 60 in the log. Then headed back to town. Dinner at the Bob Evans next door.

Next morning (Thurs) headed back over to LK04. Found the Dune Climb area but not a soul climbing it. Cold and damp and everything sopping wet from rain overnight. Put another 50 in the log.

Went back and checked into Holiday Inn at about 10am. Wow..those folks are on the ball. Had a room for me at that hour. Unloaded all the stuff in the car – the second suitcase with reserve clothes. Settled in for a few days. The hospitality room would open at noon and the meet and greet would start.

Friday morning I was suffering from withdrawal systems. No parks had to be run. Just for the heck of it, I headed 20 miles east to Kalkaska. There you can catch the North Country Scenic Trail. It was 39 deg with 10-20 mph wind. Chilly. I set up the portable station. Brrrr..this is nuts....I made 11 QSO in 40 minutes of trying.....packed up after getting thoroughly chilled...then sat in the car for the better part of an hour to get warmed up again with the heater on full blast 'hot'. I had thermal underwear back at the hotel...I should have put it on! There was no sun and it was a very damp chilling 39 deg. I must be nuts. Well....I'll skip most Scenic Trail opportunities from now on – other than first time activations – hi hi. This was a second time activation.....

Then the meet and greet started..... but I still had withdrawal systems...so Saturday I went out again to Sleeping Bear Dune Climb area...and ran it again for the folks who only can show up on weekends. Another 100 or so in the log. Now there were people climbing the couple hundred foot dunes. KA9JAC/KB9VYT would also run this park on Friday.



N4CD Sleeping Bear Dunes Climb - LK04

And that concludes the 'going part of the trip'. Now it's time for Mini Fun!

The adventure home continues later.

Michigan QSO Party

K8IR mobile (K8IR KG9GH) 627 cw 52 ssbb

It was certainly a fine day to be driving across Michigan. 74 degrees is probably the warmest we've had on a MIQP trip.

Conditions seemed to be better for us this year, especially during the early afternoon. The QRN was louder than I was hoping for at night, but people continued to be able to hear us.

We completed all 25 counties planned, and hit the end of Luce County with 1 minute to go. Another excellent job of driving and navigating by Eric, KG9GH.

My apologies to those in the pileup when we occasionally ran into some very noisy power lines. In one county, we actually drove off the main road to get to a spot where I could hear again and work down the pile before proceeding.

Thanks to all who called in, especially those who followed us around through the whole 12 hours.

It was nice to hear K8MR several times from FL. We miss you mobiling up here with us.

73

Jim K8IR and Eric KG9GH.

At the Convention

Ah....maybe you thought this part would never arrive! The best Mini in the country was about to start. Ed, K8ZZ and Joe, W8TVT once again hosted the Mini. Ed has moved to Topeka but still handled a lot of the paperwork, registrations, working with the hotel, etc. The hospitality room opened after noon and would be open for the next 2 1/2 days.

Around 65 showed up – one or two couldn't make it at the last minute. Here's the planned attendance list:

Here's the **2016** list of who are attending:

K8ZZ Ed, Topeka, KS
Reverend Kate, Topeka, KS
W8TVT Joe, Traverse City, MI
N8RRR Janet, Traverse City, MI
AB7NK Mary, Cordes Lake, AZ
K7SEN Neil, Cordes Lakes, AZ
W0GXQ Jerry, Park Rapids, MN
NF0N Mike, South Sioux City, NE
KB0BA Lowell, Blue Grass, IA
N0XYL Sandra, Blue Grass, IA
AA8R Randy, Grand, MI
W8TAX Patti, Grand, MI
N8WTQ Dorie, Midland, MI
WG9A Bill and Sandy, Batavia, IL
K8OOK Mike, Grand Rapids, MI
N8IPG Nancy, Grand Rapids, MI
WQ7A Terry and Bonnie, Yelm, WA

N4CD Bob, Plano, TX
WA9DLB Tony and Helen, Barrington, IL
KA8JPQ Pam, Finley, OH
NA8W Darl, Finley, OH
K8EMS Mike and Sherry, Gladstone, MI
NN9K Pete, Colona, IL
N9DQS Nancy, Colona, IL
KA9JAC Bob, Hortonville, WI
KA9YVT Ann, Hortonville, WI
K8AO Duane and Judy, Gladstone, MI
KD9ZP Gene, Fond du Lac, WI
K9FDL Dottie, Fond du Lac, WI
NM1G Chuck, North Kingstown, RI
WB0CQO Joe, Murray, IA
W8TZA Bill, Kalamazoo, MI
W8WKD Sharon, Kalamazoo, MI
W0NAC Matt, Parker, CO
N0LXJ, Sharon, Parker, CO
W9OP Mark, Neenah, WI
W9PIP Joan, Neenah, WI
K3IMC Don, LaGrange, GA
KJ4NIT Jean, LaGrange, GA
W4SIG Kerry, Collierville, TN
N8KIE Bob, Clarkston, MI
N8RLJ Jaci, Clarkston, MI
K4PBX Jim, Donalsonville, GA
KA2TED Sharon, Donalsonville, GA
W0ULU Fred and Kaye, Cottage Grove, MN
N8CIJ Dick and Carol, Ashland, OH

K0PFV John, Omaha, NE
WA0VDO Marion, Omaha, NE
K5GE Gene and Mary Ida, Seguin, TX

Here's a few pics from the mini

Friday we headed over to a local club for the Friday Fish Fry night. Most of the group joined in the fun.



Friday Fish Fry Night



Friday Fish Fry Night

K4PBX was a 'first timer' at the Mini



K4PBX Jim



Some of the Park Activators -
Bob KA9JAC Ann KB9YVT and Bob N8KIE

NF0N and NA8W also put out National Parks and were at the Mini



Marian WA0VDO and and John K0PFV



Judy and Duane K8AO



Bonnie and Terry, WQ7A



Darl NA8W and Pam



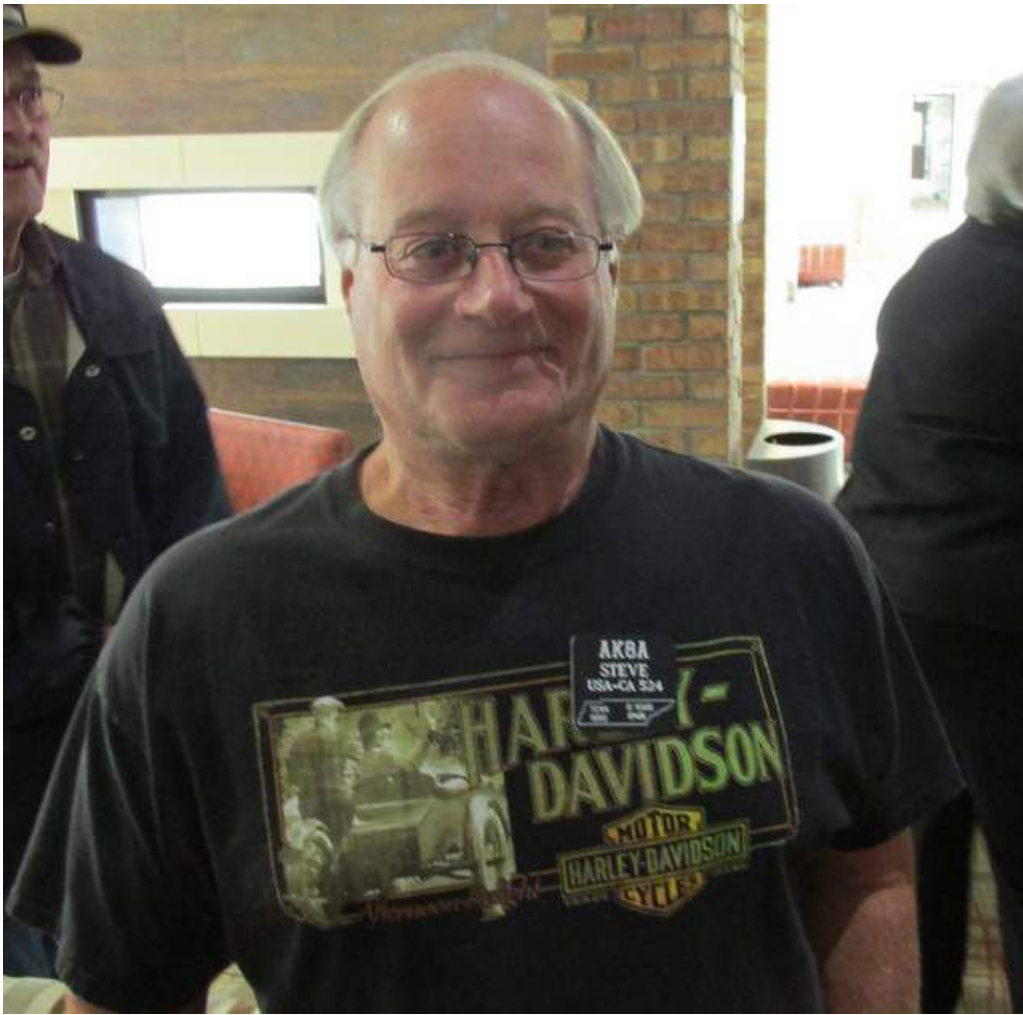
Sharon N0LXJ and Matt W0NAC



Mary AB7NK and Neil K7SEN



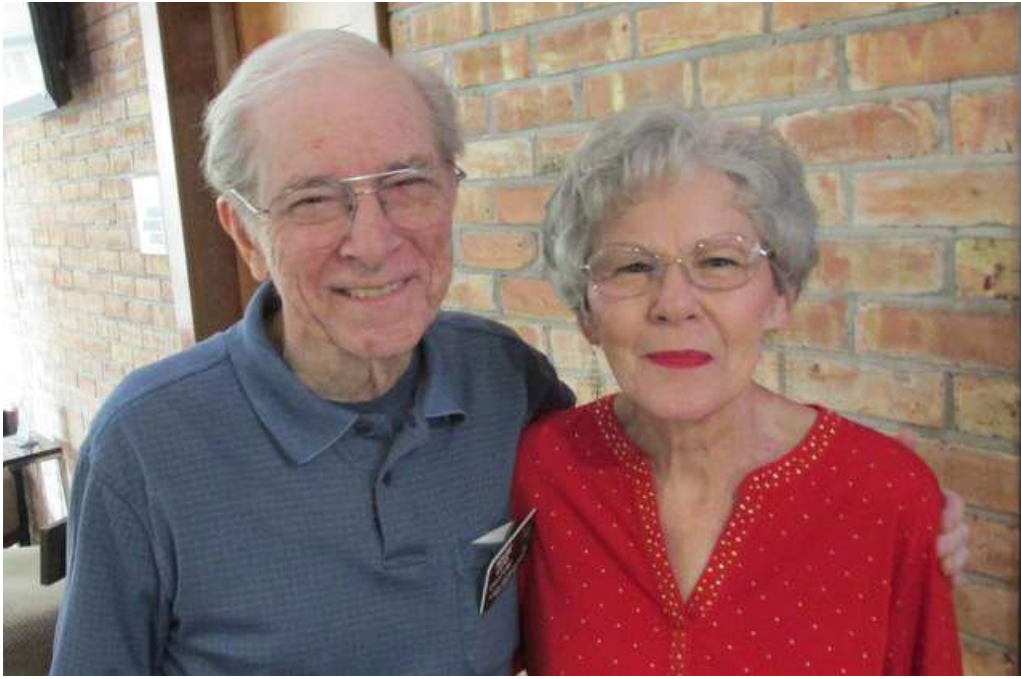
Gene KD9ZP and Dottie K9FDL



Steve AK8A



Rev Kate – XYL of K8ZZ



Gene K5GE and Mary Ida

On Saturday, Kerry talked about the National Convention in Memphis. A whole raft of activities is planned. First week of August. If you haven't signed up, now is the time. It's going to be a good one! All sorts of trips and activities and who knows, you might even meet Elvis there.

Kerry, W4SIG, also noted that MARAC will have a booth at Dayton Hamvention this year. Be sure to stop by, maybe volunteer an hour or two to 'man the booth' and talk to folks about county hunting.. Next year, a lot of the park chasers (over 3000 of them) will have sudden horrible withdrawal symptoms as the Park Chasing comes to a close. It's just a year long event ending Dec 31. If we can recruit just 10% of those park hunters, we'd double the number of active county hunters!

Later in the day, Bob, N4CD, gave a presentation on the AlexLoop portable antenna system. It's used by many folks climbing mountains, hiking trails and needing a very lightweight multiband 40-10 antenna that can be deployed just about anywhere. (You've seen pictures of it on the various Scenic Trails run above in the trip description).

We had the group picture and a fine banquet with loads of 'gifts'.



Saturday Night Banquet



The Prize Table

Everyone brings a small gift - \$5 to \$20 and puts it on the table. Then, the names of the attendees are drawn from a bowl one by one to go up and select a 'prize'. Some nifty things showed up. Done after the meal at the banquet.



The Group Picture Saturday 5PM

The weather outside was chilly – temps around 40 in the morning and strong winds. It's still close to winter here! A few days the sun peeked out and it got into the 50s.

After the banquet folks yakked for a while...then rested up after a long day of activities. Many would be leaving early in the morning for long treks home.

Nebraska QSO Party

Mike, NF0N was out in the NE QSO Party along with NE0QP.

N6MU 29 cw 10 ssb

Only had 9 Qs with stations other than the two mobiles, NF0N and NE0QP. Could sure use some more NE participation! Kudos to those fixed stations who did play, especially WB0YYE who was a beacon all weekend. 73...

John, N6MU

Rig: TS-570 & 5BTV

KN4Y - fixed - FL 7 cw

Listened with both ears, most of the time. The procedure Hear, Work, Log was used sparingly between long periods of drinking coffee, not by choice but due to bands of a higher force.

WA6KHK - fixed - CA 22 cw 24 ssb

Kudos to the 3 rovers: NE0QP, NF0N, and K5GE. I got more than twice the score I had last year when I took the plaque but I know John (N6MU) beat me this time. Good job Bud! Enjoy the Omaha steaks. Bon appetite! Couldn't really hear Fred, NE0QP, that much on Saturday and that made all the difference. Lots of fun and Fred, KB0LF (NE0QP in the contest) got me Chase county, NE, on Friday night for my last county in NE with only 7 counties left for all US counties for a second time. I worked W4WSR in Clay county, NC during the contest so I only have 6 counties left now! Anxious time! Hihi.

North Dakota QSO Party

Not many reports from ND. There were reports of half dozen contacts – probably from half dozen stations total – with some worked on multiple bands.

KN4Y – fixed – FL 1 cw

Worked that only CW operator I heard.

On the Road with N4CD IV

The time had come to get home. I'd been on the road for over two weeks and things were getting backlogged. I'd made over 4500 park contacts and folks wanted those to show up on Logbook of the World and the only way I have to do that is be home and type them in one by one at the keyboard.

Yep, it was dark outside as I arose at 5am and was on the road at 5:30am carefully heading south to Indiana – trying to avoid any or all deer up and about at that time. They like to get moving at sunrise. Only other mobile heard was Kerry as he was making a one day dash back to the Memphis TN area – worked him on 40M a few times before we got out of range of each other. Sun didn't come up till 6:30am.

I was making a beeline for home – with a short detour to 3 parks. I'm hooked and the route conveniently went by them with just short detours. I got to Indiana Dunes, LK02 – the last of the 4 LK's that exist – at 10am local time – and put it out. Good spots to run – hit the parking lot for Porter Beach after dropping by the visitor center for a passport 'stamp'. I didn't even know 80% of these parks on the trip existed before I started trip planning! Good learning experience and a lot to see. How about you? You knew about them? Or you now know about them – hi hi. Either way, it's fun.

Put a quick 100Qs in the log. This, too, has been run many times. Didn't push it. Had to get home one of these days.



Indiana Dunes – LK02

Next a bee-line to Springfield, IL for the Lincoln Home – another quick run at NS44 of

about 75Qs. This too has been run many, many times by others.



Lincoln Home – Springfield IL

Only one more on the way home – zipped over to US Grant Home in the St Louis MO area. Got there right at park closing time. Did a 45 minute run and put 50+ into the log. The place would not open again till 9am so that was enough. This too had been run many times before by many people. Not the least bit rare.



US Grant NS73

If you remember your postage stamps from the 50s and 60s...Lincoln was on the 16c one

- 16th President. Grant was on the 18th Stamp – 18th President. That's how I remember who came in what order....Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, etc. That worked until they got up to prices I couldn't afford as a kid..... hi hi. Then again, we had half a dozen less Presidents in 1958. If you have those old postage stamps in mint condition, just put them on envelopes to mail a letter. They aren't worth anything other than face value – too many of us 'collected' them.

Well...that was the trip....stayed overnight at the Super 8 in St Clair, MO...dinners at Grumpy's – a nearby Pizza emporium. Had a St Louis Style Pizza- it was Sunday night after-all. My usual pizza night – although these days I eat a very small one with lots of beans and veggies and a tomato and mushrooms. I pigged out tonight and the pizza was excellent. Next day was 11 hours of driving to home. The car wanted to take a detour to Wilson Creek Battlefield off the interstate – but enough is enough. I'd been there before already. Held it steady through boring OK yet once again to get home.

Whoo-Hoo.....ran up the total to 76 park units transmitted. 76% of the way to the 100 park goal for the year. Only a few new ones I can hit on the way to Dayton....I'll be working on that trip next here after the newsletter goes to press, I get the laundry done, the back grass cut, the car grills fixed...and a whole raft of other things.....like paying bills for all the fun – heh heh....

See y'all at Dayton in just a few weeks!

Awards

Wow...would you believe nothing out of MARAC this month for awards...and nothing out of CQ Magazine. Either no one is finishing up or the system is terribly constipated....and backed up.

Upcoming Events for County Hunters

May 7 weekend

May 7 1300z to May 8 0700z

7th Call Area QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

RS(T), SPC or 7th area 5-letter state/county code

ws7n.net/7QP

7 1500z May 8 0300z

Indiana QSO Party

CW Ph

RS(T), county or SPC

<http://www.hdxcc.org/inqp/rules.html>

May 7 1700 May 8 359z

Delaware QSO Party

CW Ph

RS(T), county or SPC

www.fsarc.org/qsoparty/rules.htm

May 7 2000z May 8 2359z

New England QSO Party

CW Ph

W1: RS(T), county, state. Non W1:

RS(T), SPC

www.neqp.org/rules.html

May 14 weekend

14 1400 May 15 0200z

Arkansas QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

RS(T), county or SPC

<http://www.arkqsoparty.com/#!/rules/c205y>

MARAC USA QSO Party

2016 (50th) MARAC USA QSO PARTY

1400z to 2400z Saturday May 14th and 1400z to 2400z Sunday May 15th

The Mobile Amateur Radio Awards Club is pleased to sponsor the 50th Annual County Hunters Contest “MARAC USA QSO PARTY.” Mobile and Fixed operation from every county in the U.S. is encouraged.

RULES

1. Mobiles must clearly identify themselves as being mobile by signing /M or /County.
2. Multipliers: Each category, Mobile, Fixed, and DX will have a separate set of 3077 Multipliers. A Multiplier can only be counted once in each category during the contest, regardless of band.
3. A Mobile on a county line can be counted for each county as a new potential multiplier and two (2) contacts (30 points). Three and four county lines are not allowed.
4. Single operator stations only. Mobile drivers are allowed.
5. Contest contacts between operators in the same vehicle or in shadowing vehicles are invalid. There are no restrictions on spotting mobile stations.
6. To be considered as “Mobile”, you must transmit from a minimum of three (3) counties.
7. Net contacts are not allowed.
8. For a contact to be valid, one station must be in a U.S. county.
9. Official list of County Codes (Multipliers) can be downloaded at:
www.w0qe.com/county_hunting.html

EXCHANGE

U.S. station: Signal report, State Code and County Abbreviation.

Ex: 599 MI JKSN or MI JKSN/CHOU

All others: Signal report, "DX" (Including Mexico and Canada)

Ex: 599 DX

SCORING

FIXED stations – 1 point

DX stations – 5 points

MOBILE stations – 15 points

MOBILES:

1. Calculate a STATE score for each state that you activate by:
 - a. Add up the Total # of QSO points worked while in that state.
 - b. Add up the total # of unique multipliers worked while in that state.
 - c. Total State score = (Total # QSO pts) x (Total # Multipliers)
2. Scores CAN NOT count a multiplier more than once regardless of the State, County or band that you are operating in.
3. Final Score = (Total QSO points from all states) x (Total Multipliers from all states)
4. You must submit a log and summary sheet for each state.
5. Submit a Summary Sheet for Total Mobile Category Score.

FIXED:

1. Scores Can Not count a multiplier more than once regardless of band.
2. Final score = (Total # QSO pts) x (Total # Multipliers)
3. You must submit a log and summary sheet.

SUGGESTED FREQUENCIES

3.550, 7.050, 14.050, 21.050, and 28050. Fixed stations should operate above the suggested frequencies and mobiles below.

AWARDS

MARAC PLAQUES: (A station can only win one plaque)

- 1st and 2nd place MOBILE and FIXED
- 1st place DX station
- 1st place Canadian Station if enough entries warrant an award.

MARAC Contest Certificates:

- Highest scoring Mobile and Fixed stations in each State.
- Highest scoring ARRL Country and Canadian Provinces.
- MARAC Participation Certificate is awarded to all entrants with at least 100 valid

contacts.

APPLICATION AND FEES: In order to be eligible for an award, an entrant must submit a log and entry information that meets all of the requirements of the contest rules. There are no contest entry fees or other fees for these awards.

LOG Submission

Send completed logs (Cabrillo format accepted) and summary sheet by June 30, 2016 to: w3dya@juno.com

Or mail to:

Norm Beavers, W3DYA
3320 McMillan Drive
Tyler, TX 75701-8239

Please note that the contest chairman will not score your log. Any logs not scored, or lack of a summary sheet, will be considered check logs only.

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Dayton! Need I say more? Friday afternoon County Hunter Get together – usually Room 2 – at 4pm. Gabfest outside Room 2 at 3:15 to 4pm.

Mike KA4RRU and Kyle WA4PGM will have a spot in the flea market. MARAC will have a booth in the arena area.

MARAC National Convention –

The annual MARAC convention will be held in Germantown, TN (near Memphis)
August - 1 to 4

See

<http://national.marac.org/>

for details

Time to sign up!

That's all folks!