

County Hunter News

May 1, 2010
Volume 6, Issue 5

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

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

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

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

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

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

The USACA award is sponsored by CQ Magazine. Rules and information are here: <http://countyhunter.com/cq.htm>

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out: <http://countyhunter.com/whatis.htm>

MARAC sponsors an award program for many other county hunting awards. You can find information on these awards and the rules at: http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at: <http://www.wd3p.net/ch/netproc/netproc.htm>

There is a lot more information at www.countyhunter.com . Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at www.CHNewsonline.com

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Notes from the Editor



N4CD Bob USACA #883

1) N4CD Rumblings

April has been a good month. Propagation has not cooperated on 20 and above well. Hardly any spots were made on 17M, and very few on 15 even in the QSO Parties. Most mobiles out running did not have or go to 17M. When I tried it mobile a few times, there was often just no propagation.

There was lots of activity back east with several mobiles running through PA and NY. Larry, W7FEN, was one of a few mobiles on cw out west. Jim, N9JF, Jeff, W9MSE, Jerry, W0GXQ, and Jim, K0ARS, provided most

of the cw activity in the Midwest. Sterling, WA7JHQ headed to ID and back running them on cw. More in the mobile activity section.

The MT QSO Party was not well attended. Maybe four or five MT stations got on – you could catch 2 or 3 on SSB. However, 2 or 3 the ops spent 10 or more hours – so you could catch them on multiple bands. There is more participate in the 7 land QSO party later on during the year.

The other QSO Parties were good and we report on them individually. There were some interesting tales of woe by the mobile operators out in the events – Murphy is never far away when it comes to ham radio, travel, vehicles, deer, breakdowns, and roads. Sooner or later, all county hunter mobiles have their own stories of things gone wrong, and overcoming the problems to keep on putting them out if possible.

The sunspot cycle sputters along. We had some days with the solar flux in the 80s, then it was back to the 70s. There were some solar storms, CMEs, Geomagnetic Storms – and 20M was only ‘OK’ for much of the month, opening late, closing early, with no short skip – at least in TX. It’s turning out that much of April has had little sunspot activity to write home about.

From the ARRL Weekly Propagation Report on 4/23/2010

“ARLP016 Propagation de K7RA

A Sun with no sunspots! The quiet Sun returned -- and through Thursday, April 22 there have been eight days straight with no sunspots.

A new spot began to emerge on Wednesday, but it quickly faded. “

It’s now up at 12 days of no sunspots. No joy.

Gas prices are creeping up to \$3/gal in many parts of the country. Ham travel will be a bit more expensive than last year. New cars are getting better mileage, though. So that eases the pain somewhat. The rare counties of Dukes and Nantucket were run – especially nice for those working on Bingo or Five Star. Those counties might be on during the New England Party, but usually by operators with no stars or other helpful credentials for other higher level awards.

I did manage to snag a bunch of counties between the GA QSO Party, the MI QSO Party, and a few mobiles running around. I'm working on the fourth time all cw, and the state QSO Parties are mainly CW (although in many there are thousands of SSB contacts made). This month I managed to finish off a few states as well with last county contacts, too. So even though propagation is not great, one can still have a lot of fun. I also gave out some needed counties although it seems the needs in TX are either 'lots of them' or scattered all over the place! (and Texas is a big state).

We had several people finish up this month, and as summer nears, there should be a lot more mobile activity compared to winter time, with even more closing in on awards. Those western states are needed by many.

2) Mobile Activity in late March and April

Larry, **W7FEN** completed a trip around ID, with a few counties run in MT. He wrote: "Idaho 44, WY 1, MT 7, 2095 mile, I had fun now the work begins."

Guff, KS5A, was over in MS, went over to AL, and headed west from there through LA and TX and NM to home in AZ.

N4JT, Jim, was spotted out in NC.

N9JF, Jim, made a trip to KS, OK, WI, MI, IA, MO, IN and other states.

Jason, **KG4VBK**, was on in TN on cw. He ran with Gary, **K4EXT** on SSB.

Jimmy **K4YFH** continued working his way east running a few everyday or so. Wound up in NC for a while. Then headed out again.

Pete, **N6HH**, was spotted in a few on cw.

NK0I travels the country putting them out on SSB. Spotted in NC, NY, ME and other states.

Tom, **K8YJ** was seen all over WV on SSB.

Duane, **K8AO** was out in WI on SSB.

Jeffrey, **AF3X**, spotted in GA, TN, on CW and SSB. He went up to MI, then headed to CA, running counties along the way.

Mark, **W8MP**, seen in OH.

Jim, **K0ARS**, operated on CW in SD, KS, MO, CO, and more on multiple trips. He only can run one band at a time and must stop to change bands.

Ron, **KB6UF**, made a few trips around LA, then a trip over to MS to get a few for the folks. Then he headed north to ME on a big trip through MO, IL, WI, hitting many he needs for MP along the way. He continued on through OH, PA, WV, CT, MA into ME where he'll spend a few weeks.

Jeff, **W9MSE**, headed from WI to OH, then back a few days later.

Mike, **KA4RRU** seen in a few in VA on the spots page.

KL1V, Kent, had a big multi-week trip starting in MI, into IN, OH, PA, NY, MA, CT, RI, NH, NJ, including trip to Dukes and Nantucket. He ran early in the morning on Dukes, then headed over to Nantucket for a few hours, then back to Dukes. It's an expensive trip. Maybe we'll have a trip report after he gets back home?

K0FG seen out and about in MO.

Jim, **W4HSA**, was out in VA and NC - spotted.

Hollis, **KC3X**, was seen again in NC on spots.

Dave, **KE3VV**, started in Sarasota, FL and headed back to Washington, DC area putting out most of the counties along the way, and getting off the interstate to run many.

Larry, **N2OCW**, ran a bunch in PA on SSB (mostly 40M, and 14.323 on 20M).

Bob, **N4XML** spotted from SC to NY as he headed north to Clinton, NY, then back home a few days later.

W0ZQ seen on SSB headed south through IA and KS. He's active in the QSO Parties as a mobile up north.

Karl, **K4YT**, spotted on a trip from VA to TN, and during the late afternoons was running more counties on SSB – 40M and 20M. No CW. He was down there for a school that let him county hunt in the afternoons and on weekends.

Bill, **K2HVN**, ran a few in VT and NH for the folks.

Dan, **AA0TT** was seen in many places for a few counties a day.

Barry, **N0KV**, and Pat, **N0DXE** were out and about in CO.

Mike, **W0MU**, was spotted mobile on SSB in a few.

Sterling, **WA7JHQ**, made a long trip to ID, then back home.

Tim, **W8JJ**, was out in the MI QSO Party. **K8ZZ**, Ed, ran a couple in MI using a new Hustler system.

Ralph, **WA4HXG**, was out in TN and NC on SSB. Jerry, **N4JR** was spotted in NC.

The MI mini was held in April, and mobiles headed there. **W0GXQ**, **W8JJ**, **K8AO**, **AC0B**, **KA9JAC**/**KB9YVT**, **KF5AT**, **NG9L**, **WB0CQO**, **WG9A**, **AF3X**, **K8ZZ**, **N8KIE**, **KM9X**/**KB9MGI** were spotted on the county hunter site.

Ed, **KN4Y**, was on for the 10-10 contest. He was 599 in TX for a while, and on Saturday during the FQP, a few stations were heard in TX on 10 and 15M but not many. Still a two new band counties. Mobiles stuck to lower bands. He didn't have a lot of action on 10M – sunspots nowhere near high enough, and it was just some E-skip type propagation over the weekend.

Gene, **K5GE** took a short trip in TX over the weekend. N3VL was giving out no-star counties on the net – and counties for those who needed them for other awards.

N9QS, Silver, headed to VA – he’s been running around in eastern VA, and has started home via KY.

3) County Lines on your Garmin Nuvi GPS unit

Further inquiries have been made how to put county lines on those nice Garmin GPS units.

Here are the links.

Download the map overlay here

<http://www.gpsfiledepot.com/maps/view/10/>

Instructions on how to do it

<http://www.gpsfiledepot.com/tutorials/how-to-load-maps-on-my-garmin-gps-unit/>

It appears that all other programs running on your PC must be ‘off’ to make it work.

4) AT&T DSL Intermittent?

There was some discussion on folks having intermittent AT&T DSL service, and having to unplug and replug the cord into the wall to reboot things a few times a day.

WA2ABD suggests that you try this:

“My son tells me that such a problem is caused by the modem/router/firewall setup is not recognizing your computers ID number. I forget the technical terms involved here. I know I also had the same problem at one time, and he did some reconfiguration of the router and then all was

well. Sorry I can't be of any immediate help. However, I do remember that if I right click on the Local Area Connection, there is a menu item called "repair", and your computer and modem/router agree on the ID number automatically. (Using XP platform)"

That seems to have fixed the problem for the ham having the problem, so you might try that before getting more gray hairs if you have a similar situation.

5) County Lines - Possibilities

You've probably heard "I'm on the county line" of X and Y counties thousands of times if you are a county hunter. So how many possibilities for 'county lines' are there? Would you believe there are over 15,000 possibilities to run a county line? Like Collin County TX and Denton, or Collin TX and Grayson, or Collin County and Hunt or Collin County and Dallas or Collin County and Rockwall? The MARAC Logger (and earlier versions including Kwiklog contain a database of possible to run 'county line' combinations to help you log and to also alert you to impossible lines.

Occasionally a mobile op will get confused and read the map wrong (or computer screen) and run a line that doesn't exist by skipping an intervening county, such as trying to run Collin County, TX and Hopkins TX – there's a county in between. With the maps, and eyes that aren't perfect, you can sometimes misread the map or misnavigate or read the sign wrong

There are also some that may be very difficult to run, such as an island in a river that has both counties on it, but no bridge to get to it, or a 4 wheel drive path to get there. A few in Colorado are like that – 12,000 plus foot mountain passes requiring a Jeep style vehicle and a few hours to get to the pass on dirt/gravel/rock trail – only for the adventurous. One or two county hunters has tried to work every possibility of county lines, naturally. You cannot work all the counties that way – other than Kalawao, unless you have your own private ocean going yacht, you are not going to run Hawaii counties as 'county lines' and the same true for Nantucket and Dukes, San Juan WA, NY, NY, or the majority of 'wet line' type situations.

Some are in such congested areas, it's impossible to stop, and a few have such high noise from power lines you won't hear anything but noise –

sometimes another road, if it exists, is a possibility. If you go on a route to the same destination, after a while, you have a mental database of what works and what doesn't work as far as operating locations! (or what to avoid or run separately). Starting out, or running them for the first time, there are many nice finds – and many disappointments when you get there and find you cannot run the line for one reason or another. Some are in deep cuts in the mountains – you can park there, but no one can hear you (try Ouray/San Juan, CO) or a few in WV – that just 'don't work' worth a darn, or down in deep valleys surrounded by mountains. You might get a few contacts but miss the rest of the contacts due to a bad location. It's still 'possible' but not the place to be.

In the CA QSO Party, one boat operator sat in San Francisco Bay and ran the 4 counties (very wet line) more than once. The rules in some state QSO Parties allow you to be 'within 500 feet' of a county line (PA was one) and claim being on the line. There are not many lines where you can actually get your vehicle on a 3 or 4 way line. Out in the panhandle of TX, there are at least two places which are so off the beaten path you can actually sit in the middle of 'an intersection' and be in all four with your vehicle at once time, but MARAC only allows two counties to be run at a time (a contact). In most cases in other states, those multi-way lines are in the middle of busy intersections where you simply cannot park. (and usually under crossing power lines to make it noisy). So plan on running only two at a time, and move and park on the real county line (as best as you can determine from the signs or GPS) for the other two if you hit a '4 way'.

Some lines are on interstates – and in most cases, it is highly discouraged, or illegal, to stop on the interstate unless you have an 'emergency'. Of course, having a 'bad leg cramp' might get you off if you are just there a few minutes, but often the police will check on you, or if it is not your lucky day, give you a ticket. Unless you are far off the road, it is hazardous as there are lots of distracted, sleepy or otherwise impaired drivers who might come careening down the shoulder and end a county hunter's career. So be careful if you try this one. I've done it nervously a few times, or stopped to snap a quick picture for a 'last county' to send to someone. If you are in a state that has a 'county line road' as an exit – that sometimes provides exactly what you need to run it! Most don't.

Experienced county hunters who have been around their state or the county will know a lot of the county lines by heart, and likely you too if you pass by

or run those county lines yourself in your home area. You can mentally track the progress of the mobiles – knowing where they are and what is coming up! That’s another fun part of being a county hunter – “I’ve been there” whether it be Kalawao/Maui, HI or Collin/Hunt, TX or the one 100 miles from your QTH that you’ve run 30 times. You can ‘ride along’ with the others.

LORAN C Navigation System Shuts Down

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Coast Guard terminated broadcast of the North American Long Range Navigation-C signal at 3 p.m. Monday with the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center in Alexandria, Va., coordinating the shutdown.

The LORAN system began as a radio-based navigation system during World War II under a secret program to provide the Allied forces with a reliable and accurate means of navigation at sea in any weather. Receivers for aircraft were eventually developed and the LORAN system expanded to all aspects of the military. LORAN Stations were first established in the Atlantic in 1942 and then in the Pacific. The LORAN system was then used by the Army Air Forces in the bombing campaign against the Japanese homeland. The Coast Guard retained and expanded the LORAN system at the end of the war for merchant and military use.

LORAN has, as a result of technological advancements in the last 20 years, become an antiquated system no longer required by the armed forces, the transportation sector or the nation’s security interests and is used only by a small percentage of the population. Continued use of limited resources to operate LORAN-C is no longer prudent use of taxpayer funds and is not allowed under the 2010 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act.

Notice of the termination of the signal was published in the Federal Register Jan. 7. Termination of the program was supported through the enactment of the fiscal year 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill.

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“The current version of LORAN in common use is LORAN-C, which operates in the low frequency portion of the EM spectrum from 90 to 110 kHz.

LORAN was an American development, advancing the technology of the British GEE radio navigation system that was used early in World War II. While GEE had a range of about 400 miles (644 km), initial LORAN systems had a range of 1,200 miles (1,930 km). It originally was known as "LRN" for *Loomis Radio Navigation*, after Alfred Lee Loomis, who invented the longer range system and played a crucial role in military research and development during WWII, but later was renamed to the abbreviation for the more descriptive term. LORAN systems were built during World War II after development at the MIT Radiation Laboratory and were used extensively by the US Navy and Royal Navy. The RAF also used LORAN on raids beyond the range of GEE”

Source: Wikipedia

Lots more reading is available at Wikipedia.com for those who like to learn about obsolete technologies. Shutting down Loran-C will save the government about 35 million a year, or 100 million over five years. There were 28 US Loran C stations in use up to February. Now zero.

On the Road with N4CD – I

The mobile antenna needed retuning with the loss of the 30M resonator, and I didn't have a spare. I added on a 15 and 12M resonator to the multi-way adapter at the top and tuned them up, using a step ladder to adjust them (40,

30, 12, and 15). OK, I'd try a day with 40, 20, 17, 15, and 12M to see how that would work out. Something new. 17M and 40M SSB used two Hamsticks on separate mag mounts. I have a multi-way antenna switch near the radio.

Jack, N7ID, needed a handful of counties in TX to finish up his Master Platinum Award. He only works SSB. Master Platinum requires working someone with a Master Gold Award in each county. There was a hamfest out in Parker County March 27, so I decided to head out there for the hamfest – about 75 miles away, then come back through 3 that he needed.

It was way dark as I headed out west from home, arriving there at 7:30am. The Parker County hamfest is small so you can see it all in an hour – twice. There were a few Hallicrafters boat anchors, an old Heathkit SB-100, some old 2M mobiles, some Hustler 75M resonators and lots of misc, but I didn't spend a whole lot of money there.

After a quick second breakfast, I headed back east, but put out all the counties along the way. I'm trying to work someone with Platinum from each of the counties I go through. That's a challenge since only 7 have finished MP and I'm one. A few seldom get on, so the active ones are just a few at the moment. Other folks are collecting Platinum counties from these mobiles in anticipation that someday there might be an award beyond Platinum. I needed a few close by ones I hadn't caught yet to work another Platinum holder.

So first it was Parker – wow, 17M was open nicely. Even OH3JF made it into the log on 17 in most of the counties, and some runs were over 12 on 17M. Then into Tarrant – which I normally don't run on multiple bands since you get right into downtown Cow Town (Ft. Worth) with six or eight lanes of traffic and lots of noise. This time I found a quiet place and put it out on four bands (40/20/17/15). The 30M resonator fell off last trip – the hole on the six way adapter got too worn and it simply fell off somewhere. No spare – waiting for new Hustler to arrive by UPS. Oh well.

Then Jack N7ID needed Denton, Cooke and Grayson. The weather was nice – temp near 70, but wind howling 30mph gusting 40-50 mph. That beats the snow we had just in time for the OKLA QSO party. This was the CQ WPX SSB contest weekend. 20M SSB band was a giant mess of CQ contest. So what does a smart county hunter do to work another on SSB

with 40 and 20M jammed up? Why, 17M of course. Jack had never made a contact on 17M, but his antenna covered it – he has a 10-30 MHz log periodic...and, by golly, it worked just fine from ID to TX on or about 18.130 MHz. He got his 3 counties needed despite 20M being a gigantic contest zoo!

There is not much to report out of the ordinary. Gene, K5GE caught up with me where needed for getting another MP operator worked, and I put out the county on several bands. I even checked 40M SSB, and it seemed Dan, KM9X was fighting off the contest QRM, but not many mobiles venturing forth on SSB.

At lunch, I was up in Grayson and found a nice gas station to stop for a break. They made sandwiches so I had one and relaxed a bit after getting those 3 counties for Jack. Now he needs 4 more and 3 of them are a short day trip – so that will be upcoming soon. I didn't see too many other needs posted in TX nearby. Then it was straight south hitting gigantic traffic mess with horrendous suburban sprawl in Frisco – two lane roads being widened to six lanes – but with even more delays now due to construction. Oh well, I just listened to the satellite radio and it was stop and go at 10MPH for an hour till I got close to home. There's a reason they build toll roads in many places around here!

Jerry, W0GXQ, was on his trip in NE/KS – caught him in a few for Natural Bingo – log 'em but not sure I will ever go back through 200,000 or more old contacts to check for NB and other awards. Also I got new county from Jack on 17M SSB for County Challenge award, too! Jeffrey, AF3X, was up in KY and IN running – headed north - might need that "A" prefix some day, so naturally worked him in counties and gave him mine. K4YFH was in TN, and Guff, KS5A was out in MS putting out a few. It was nice on cw – lots of activity.

The N4CD mobile was home by 2pm. More short trips coming up! Oh, I had exactly one contact on 15M, and none on 12M. My guess is that it really isn't time for 15 and 12 yet, but one can hope. 17M is now working out great when you are far enough away (long skip) and in the middle of the day. Maybe we'll wait six more months for 15? Who knows when 12M might open? You never know with E-skip and other weird propagation modes, though. There have been few 15M contacts even in the QSO parties

with both stations with good antennas and often high power. I'll still be trying 17M during middle of day to see if we can make it work.

Peak Oil News Update

US military warns oil output may dip causing massive shortages by 2015. Shortfall could reach 10m barrels a day, report says

- Cost of crude oil is predicted to top \$100 a barrel

The US military has warned that surplus oil production capacity could disappear within two years and there could be serious shortages by 2015 with a significant economic and political impact.

The energy crisis outlined in a Joint Operating Environment report from the US Joint Forces Command, comes as the price of petrol in Britain reaches record levels and the cost of crude is predicted to soon top \$100 a barrel.

"By 2012, surplus oil production capacity could entirely disappear, and as early as 2015, the shortfall in output could reach nearly 10 million barrels per day," says the report, which has a foreword by a senior commander, General James N Mattis.

It adds: "While it is difficult to predict precisely what economic, political, and strategic effects such a shortfall might produce, it surely would reduce the prospects for growth in both the developing and developed worlds. Such an economic slowdown would exacerbate other unresolved tensions, push fragile and failing states further down the path toward collapse, and perhaps have serious economic impact on both China and India."

The US military says its views cannot be taken as US government policy but admits they are meant to provide the Joint Forces with "an intellectual foundation upon which we will construct the concept to guide out future force developments."

The warning is the latest in a series from around the world that has turned peak oil – the moment when demand exceeds supply – from a distant threat to a more immediate risk.

The Wicks Review on UK energy policy published last summer effectively dismissed fears but Lord Hunt, the British energy minister, met concerned industrialists two weeks ago in a sign that it is rapidly changing its mind on the seriousness of the issue.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency remains confident that there is no short-term risk of oil shortages but privately some senior officials have admitted there is considerable disagreement internally about this upbeat stance.

Future fuel supplies are of acute importance to the US army because it is believed to be the biggest single user of petrol in the world. BP chief executive, Tony Hayward, said recently that there was little chance of crude from the carbon-heavy Canadian tar sands being banned in America because the US military like to have local supplies rather than rely on the politically unstable Middle East.

But there are signs that the US Department of Energy might also be changing its stance on peak oil. In a recent interview with French newspaper, Le Monde, Glen Sweetnam, main oil adviser to the Obama administration, admitted that "a chance exists that we may experience a decline" of world liquid fuels production between 2011 and 2015 if the investment was not forthcoming.

Lionel Badal, a post-graduate student at Kings College, London, who has been researching peak oil theories, said the review by the American military moves the debate on.

"It's surprising to see that the US Army, unlike the US Department of Energy, publicly warns of major oil shortages in the near-term. Now it could be interesting to know on which study the information is based on," he said.

"The Energy Information Administration (of the department of energy) has been saying for years that Peak Oil was "decades away". In light of the report from the US Joint Forces Command, is the EIA still confident of its

previous highly optimistic conclusions?"

The Joint Operating Environment report paints a bleak picture of what can happen on occasions when there is serious economic upheaval. "One should not forget that the Great Depression spawned a number of totalitarian regimes that sought economic prosperity for their nations by ruthless conquest," it points out.

Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/apr/11/peak-oil-production-supply>

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10 million barrels per day (MBD), that represents the production of Saudi Arabia, the world's leading petroleum producer. Such a shortfall, if it should come, would be more than 10 percent of the world demand for crude, which is today 86.5 MBD, and ought to reach 90 MBD in 2015.

If this hypothesis of the Pentagon comes to pass, a third oil shock would hit the world economy, one that would probably be more violent than the two preceding ones.

But in fact, 10 MBD in 2015 ...

An identical prediction of a gap of 10 MBD between supply and demand in 2015 appeared on page 8 in the Department of Energy (DoE) document published in investigative report here on March 21.

The DoD and the DoE seem to agree on the same prediction ... breathtaking.

State QSO Parties I

Missouri QSO Party

This is usually a sleeper, but this year a few mobiles decided to head to MO and make it very interesting. K5YAA, W0BH, NV0S, W5TM and K0RU came from out of state to run dozens of counties in the west and southern parts of MO. KC0M from MO also ran mobile. So it turned out to be a very nice weekend for chasing those mobiles. Several fixed stations, including W0MA (bonus station), W0JPL, KI7WO, W4RX, NV0U, AB0RX, KC0MO were on to give out their home counties.

The weather was decent – no snow, no ice and moderate temps. Despite being ‘Easter weekend’, there was lots of activity. Propagation on 20M was ‘long’ and I didn’t even hear many calling the mobiles on 20M – and MO is too close to my QTH in TX for any 20M propagation. This contest runs till midnight local time on Saturday, so there was activity on 80M as well, and a dozen stations were spotted on 40M SSB for those looking for extra multipliers, points, or who only operate on SSB. On Sunday, it started again at 1pm local and ran till 0000 or 7pm local time.

I needed about 8 in MO, and only 1 was run that I heard (Platte, MO by K0RU). I missed K5YAA late at night in another I needed. Most of my needs are in the hilly northern part, and no mobile ventured up that way this year. That area is ‘slow going’. For those needing the southern part, they were well run. Naturally, with many ‘no star’ mobiles – in fact all of them – there were ample opportunities to fill in the ‘no star’ book, and there were a few hits for Natural Bingo such as W5TM in Taney and W0BH in Howell, MO. When I recognize a Natural Bingo county, I usually spot the station on W6RK as “W5TM 7043 Taney, MO (NB)” to alert folks to that possible need. With two “W”, a “K” prefixes – you also had opportunities to add to your USA-PA listings. On SSB, an “N” prefix was also in the log for a few counties.

I made over 100 contacts – between SSB and CW – most were on CW. It’s hard to hear the mobiles on SSB most of the time, and some runs were

totally buried by QRM. Bob W0BH likes to hang out on '48' – 7048, 3548, 14048 – and unfortunately was buried most of the time on 7248 by a loud day long QSO by a few W9s having a marathon QSO. That didn't work out well. You could set your radio on 7048 waiting for the next county to get run after you checked the other frequencies used by the other mobiles – K5YAA ran on one, K0RU showed up on 7044 consistently, etc!

The regular county hunters in MO were strangely silent other than Alan, KI7WO. We have a few more resident county hunters there, but not a 'peep' from them – it would be nice if folks got on at least for a few hours to give out their home county!

From the 3830 Contest reflector:

K5YAA/mobile

First the highlights:

#1 My last QSO in the Missouri QSO Party was an eyeball and dinner with W0BH and XYL Lorna. I'd say that was the best QSO I had in the party!

#2 80 meters was better than 20!

#3 The countryside of Missouri is still as beautiful as I remember it from 20 years ago. Red buds were beginning to bloom and the grass is turning green.

#4 The WX was nearly perfect except for a fairly stiff wind on Sunday.

Now the Lowlights:

#1 My schedule on Saturday went haywire when I took Hwy 7 instead of Hwy 13 in Henry County. Ended up on some of the "lettered" roads - those without numbers and they are little black lines on the map not the red ones. The Tarheel got a whacking up and down those roads but kept working for the duration. I was already late when I hit Henry county and got 45 more minutes behind. My mistake was I picked up the microphone to make a few "moving" Qs and went right on past my turn. Should have known better than to go to that mode.

#2 Didn't get to make any Qs from Callaway because of the schedule slippage and just barely made any from the Audrain and Boone line before time ran out Saturday.

#3 The bands were not really in all that good a shape. Had they been 1,000 Qs would have been easily made even without a driver.

Thanks to the many who followed me around in this one. Calls that showed up many times in my log were (from memory) : KO1U, K5CM, N6MU, N4CD, W3DYA, NO5W, K4AMC, AF9T, K9EN, W1END, DL3DXX, N4PN, K4BAI, NW6S, N5NA, KE0G, K0HNC,.

Bug sending and paper logging. Very little air time while driving in this one. The roads are not as straight as the ones in Kansas! Hills and curves which do not for CW sending make.

73 - K5YAA

K0RU/mobile

“I had a wonderful time, just too bad it was on Easter Weekend. But being that the XYL had to work Saturday, it made out perfect that I had sometime to go and play. Saturday wasn't too bad. Ran through some bumps and bruises though, had a real bad ground connection on one of my coax jumpers from the amp to the wattmeter which didn't show up until I tried to run some power on 80m that night, boy what a headache that created. Eventually got K4BAI John on QRG with me as I stopped and stripped back the coax shield and revealed the bad ground connections and then using a carpet knife and a hose clamp was able to secure it to get the rest of the county run. Thank goodness for the Junk in my Trunk.

My XYL is always saying you should take some of the crap out of the trunk and now I see just why that crap is in my truck, you just never know!

Sunday I figured I would run the Northwest area, it seemed that during Saturday I wasn't hearing any stations from the Northwest part of MO... Wow what fun, Hit some rare counties and the pileups were crazy. What

wonderful ops though, a lot of people were patient for my stop and goes with some of the power line QRN (when running mobile on the fly you get power line noise bad as you approach power sub-stations etc) but folks were great about standing by till I got away from those areas.

It was nice to see a lot of friends on the air calling as well, especially thanks to all the friends in the County Hunters (I don't collect counties for County Hunters, but I love putting out the counties for those folks to collect).

MOQP was a lot of fun and I'm looking forward to the next one. If I can find someone who wants to go and run their callsign on SSB for the MOQP, TXQP, OKQP or KSQP they are welcome to chat with me and they can run their callsign on SSB because I DO NOT RUN SSB!"

W0BH/mobile

An early spring blizzard kept us away from the Oklahoma QSO Party, so Lorna and I were really ready to head out for our first travel adventure of 2010. Lorna likes bird-watching as much as I like contesting, so we decided to combine hobbies. Lorna found four birding hotspots in southern Missouri and I planned a route which put us near three of them overnight and one of them enroute in a rare county.

The equipment configuration in the Astro van hasn't changed since the Kansas QSO Party. From the 706 with Logikey K-4 keyer, MFJ travel paddle and MFJ Voice Keyer, I'm using three Hustler vertical sets on triple mag-mounts: 20CW/40CW/15, 20SSB/40SSB/10 and 80CW.

Two Dell laptops run NA with keying, rig control, and DeLorme GPS and Street Atlas software. The only "equipment" problem we had this trip was before we even started. The rear door of the van locked us out for awhile, so we attached a wire to the locking mechanism to be able to manually lock and unlock the door.

After staying in a nice Bed and Breakfast in Nevada MO, we headed out to Lorna's first birding area in Vernon County. Lorna could probably write a

whole page on that experience, but let's just say she enjoyed it! With an hour to go before the 1:00pm start time, we headed over to the second birding area which conveniently had a county line running through it. When we got there, we found a very nice campground on the lake with at least one campsite exactly on the county line according to my GPS! Something to keep in mind for another year. At 1:00pm, I put out my first CQ and found NN9K and K4AMC for my first four Qs.

Saturday went by very smoothly. Band conditions were good on both 20m and 40m, and there was definitely more activity on than in previous years. The weather was "perfect" (especially compared to Oklahoma a few weeks ago) and the roadsides were just starting to turn green. Missouri roads in the Ozarks aren't straight like Kansas roads, so as the day continued, we got further and further behind schedule. Since the QSO party ran until midnight, that really wasn't a problem from a county standpoint, but we ended up skipping one birding area to reclaim an hour of time. We rolled into Poplar Bluff in Butler County about 10:00pm. I tried a few more Qs from the motel parking lot before pulling the plug on a successful first day.

Sunday found us heading home after another nice birding expedition to Lake Wappapello State Park. N6MU managed to work me in every county on Saturday and he was back on to try and continue the streak. Lots of others were back as well which is a big reason this is so much fun. Howell was the only county I went through twice, once on Saturday and again on Sunday.

As I went into the county after Howell, K0HNC informed me that the abbreviation for Howell was HWL, not HOW which I'd been sending. Sure enough, it was. I'll put HWL in my log for Howell since that's where I was. I did not go through Howard County (the real HOW) on either day.

With a half hour to go, I had just crossed into Lawrence County and started off on 20m SSB. N7UR was there as he was many other times this weekend, but this time an earthquake was, too, and he said he felt it in Nevada. N6MU reported the same from California. That made the last 30 minutes even more exciting as we rushed to get into one last county before the closing bell. We made Newton County with seven minutes to spare and made a few more Qs before time ran out. John, N6MU, found us there, too, which made him a perfect 100% on my 25 counties. That's a great habit, John!

Right after the party, I found Jerry, K5YAA/m on 80m CW. He was one county north heading west towards Joplin on I-44. I asked him what highway marker and he sent back 16. A few minutes later he sent back 14 which put him about 15 minutes ahead of us, so we decided to meet for supper. Jerry stopped to get gas and we put him in charge of looking for a place to eat. When he came back on, he suggested Cheddars. While looking at the map, I asked him for the exit and he sent 86, the number of a highway I saw on the map heading south from I-44 in southwest Joplin. Since I was expecting a lower exit number, I asked again and once again heard 86, so 86 it was. Lorna found Exit 6 for highway 86 and turned right as instructed by Jerry.

A mile later, still no Cheddars (keep in mind, both Lorna and I are really hungry by now!). Jerry was off the air getting a table, so I called him on his cell and found out he'd been sending 8B, not 86! I teach an air traffic control class at Hesston College, and we call that "hearback" error .. you hear what you expect to hear. I saw 86 and thought I heard 86. The GPS quickly rerouted us and we arrived even more hungry a few minutes later! We pulled in behind his kilowatt mobile van and trailer combo which were easily recognizable even without a huge coating of ice and snow. As Jerry so kindly put it in his post, the best QSO of the party was indeed our lunch together.

Special thanks to the following ops for 10 or (way) more contacts:

51 N6MU
20 AF9T
18 K0HNC N4CD
17 K5CM W1DWA
16 N8NA NT5O
15 K9EN WA7ID
14 N5NA
13 AD5WI DL3DXX N7UR NN8L NO5W W1END
12 K5LH KI2G NW6S W0KSD
11 NS2X NU0Q W3DYA
10 K2XE KU5B N4PN W7OM

W0BH Award Winners

First Place Very Honorable Mention

Most overall Qs:	N6MU/51	AF9T/20	N4CD/18
Most CW Qs:	N6MU/28	AF9T/20	N4CD/17
Most PH Qs:	N6MU/23	N7UR/13	W1KDA/9
Most counties:	N6MU/25	AF9T/19	N4CD/17

Lorna and I drove a total of 1166 miles round trip from Kansas. The birding / QSO party combination worked really well and we'll likely try it again next

year in a different part of the state. I also want to congratulate several of you for last county in Missouri .. happy to help out. I forgot to write down calls, so rather than get them wrong, I'll just wait to hear from you. Thanks to the BEARS for sponsoring the event, and many thanks to all of you for the Qs!

73, Bob/w0bh and Lorna/k0why”

W3DYA(TX) (59 cw 42 mults) - “Lots of fun and didn't have to wait long for mobiles - great job! But I wonder what was going on in the SW corner of Missouri at the end of the contest (Barton, Jasper, Lawrence and Newton) - did someone invite the mobiles to a party?”

NO5W(TX) 63CW – 37 Mults: “Score includes 100 bonus points for working W0MA. Many thanks to the OK and KS mobiles who invaded MO and were the source of 47 of my 63 QSOs: K5YAA(14), W0BH(13), W5TM(11), K0RU(9). Perhaps those OK ops were seeking better wx than in the recent OKQP -- looks like they found it.”

K5CM(OK) 109 CW 36 SSB 64 Mults :“Like most state QSO parties, the Rovers make the contest. K5YAA(19), W5TM(19), W0HB(15), K0RU(14), KV0S(5) KC0M(4). The 20 meter skip zone between OK and MO was just to long, but signals were good on 40 and 80 meters. QRN was just starting to be a problem as the contest ended.”

AF9T (WI) 90cw 20 ssb 59 mults. – Looks like he led the pack in getting the most number of multipliers (counties) worked!

K4BAI(GA) 50 CW 36 Mults : “Time was limited this year, primarily due to long-delayed yard work on Saturday. 20M was too long for GA to MO QSOs generally. Score includes 100 bonus points for QSO with W0MA. 40 and 80 were good. Never heard any MO stations on 75M. Wonder where they were? There were some clear frequencies near the published frequency of 3825, but heard no MO stations there this year. Thanks for all the QSOs, especially for the new county Benton from W5TM/M. I still need nine MO counties: Bollinger, Howard, Oregon, Perry, Pike, Ray, Ripley, St. Genevieve, Stone. Any suggestions would be welcome. “

N6MU (CA) 90 CW 67 SSB 56 Multipliers

US Launches Secret Flying Twinkie

Whoa! With a title like that – I just had to read the article in the latest IEEE Spectrum Magazine. Those ‘twinkies’ keep popping up all over the place.

“The liftoff of an Atlas V rocket from Cape Canaveral this month will mark one of the most secretive U.S. Air Force spaceflights in decades. Guessing the nature of the secret has become a sport among aficionados.

The 6000-kilogram, 8-meter X-37B OTV-1 is often called a flying Twinkie because of its stubby-winged shape. It was built in the Boeing Phantom Works high-security facility in Seal Beach, Calif. In the flight test, the craft is supposed to orbit Earth for several weeks, maneuver in orbit, and glide its way to a landing strip at Vandenberg Air Force Base, in California.



“Flying Twinkie” - X-37B

The smart money is betting that the flight will put to the test systems that enable satellites to protect themselves from enemy attack. The most important trick in such self-protection is determining whether you are under attack at all. A clever enemy will want the attack to seem to be a mere accident. That way he'd leave no return address.

The official description of the mission talks of demonstrating "a rapid-turnaround airborne test bed."

Official explanations also mention putting the space plane through all its steps in orbital flight—including in-orbit maneuvering, descent and landing—while demonstrating or testing 30-odd technologies, including guidance and navigation, thermal protection and power-distribution systems, and streamlined flight, all of potential use on future vehicles.

To test such capabilities properly, the mission might conceivably deploy subsatellites to impersonate enemy craft, or bogies. They'd stalk the mother ship using autonomous approach techniques tested in recent years, giving it the chance to detect clues to their presence. The X-37B has a pickup-bed-size payload bay that could carry such instruments and subsatellites.

Observers suspect that the test flight may involve observations of another space vehicle. This suspicion was fanned by the announcement in late February that a Mach-5 hypersonic glider would be launched from

California toward a Pacific tracking site during the X-37B's first week in orbit.

"That is a pretty interesting coincidence," noted Brian Weeden, a Montreal-based space and missile advisor for the Secure World Foundation, a private group in Superior, Colo., that monitors space technology

More at: <http://spectrum.ieee.org/aerospace/space-flight/us-air-force-launches-secret-flying-twinkie>

News Update – Friday 4/23/10

A US Air Force unmanned spacecraft has blasted off from Florida, amid a veil of secrecy about its military mission.

The robotic space plane, or X-37B, lifted off from Cape Canaveral atop an Atlas V rocket at 7:52 pm local time (2352 GMT) Thursday, according to video released by the military.

Officials said the X-37B would eventually return for a landing at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, but did not say how long the inaugural mission would last. "In all honesty, we don't know when it's coming back," Gary Payton, deputy undersecretary for Air Force space programs, told reporters in a conference call this week. Payton said the plane could stay in space for up to nine months."

On the Road with N4CD Part II

Jack, N7ID, still needed 4 more in Texas. The weather was supposed to be very nice and spring like on Monday – it was 40 deg in the morning - expected to top out at 73 or so and sun all day. Hey, you can't argue with

that. Even better, the sun was staying up longer, so you didn't have to rush home to be home before dark.

Three of the needed counties were within an easy day drive, so after checking with Jack, N7ID to make sure he would be around, I headed out after morning rush hour to go over and get Delta, TX. Things went well, and I arrived over there in less than 2 hours. I ran it on cw, and then switched over to 40M SSB. The net was in full operation with mobiles running in several states. During the run, I worked N7ID on 40M so there wasn't even a need to go to 20M or 17M SSB for that one. Serendipity!

It was then back through Hunt, down through Van Zandt, and then to the county line of Kaufman and Henderson, the other two needed by Jack. No problems and it took about 1 ½ hours to get down there. No copy on 40M SSB at high noon, and 17M didn't work either – no copy. So we did it on 20M off the net frequency, and Jack got his next to last in TX. My antenna is tuned for 20M CW – and it doesn't radiate all that well above 14.300 with a 3:1 VSWR – so sometimes below that is better for skeds. The last one Jack needs is 400+ miles to the northwest - Hansford, so that might take a while to get out there. I usually run the panhandle every six months but have been slacking off lately.

Conditions were good on 40M, with exchanges with mobiles in GA and MD and MI. CW worked fine too, and Jerry, W0GXQ was on his way home from far Kansas via lots of interesting counties in MO and IA and NE.

17M opened late, and only a handful were worked today. PA3ARM has 17M! On 20M, I worked 8 different DX stations, including an RZ3, LY1, IK2, OK1, PA3, SP5, plus KL1V in AK and KH6G in HI. The day was nice and sunny so I could roll the windows down at county lines and enjoy the spring temps. I made it home by 2pm after a lunch stop to avoid the weekday rush hour. Only one contact was made on 15M today, and zip on 12M. I guess I'll have to take that one off when I get the new 30M. I sure miss not having 30M – it's a good band. Replacement resonator has been ordered. I like the W9UCW style resonators, but now have only a choice of the Hustler resonator – and only some large mail order outfits even carry it! (IF anyone has a spare 30M W9UCW – let me know!).

For two days, the two day trips were a total of 445 miles of driving, and I never got more than 100 miles from home. Hmmm..... Hope you caught something you needed.

NASA's New Solar Dynamics Lab

“At a press conference today in Washington DC, researchers unveiled "First Light" images from NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, a space telescope designed to study the sun. "SDO is working beautifully," reports project scientist Dean Pesnell of the Goddard Space Flight Center. "This is even better than we could have dreamed."

Launched on February 11th from Cape Canaveral, the observatory has spent the past two months moving into a geosynchronous orbit and activating its instruments. As soon as SDO's telescope doors opened, the spacecraft began beaming back scenes so beautiful and puzzlingly complex that even seasoned observers were stunned.

<http://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/>

“NASA released stunning new images captured by their Solar Dynamics Observatory, or SDO, a space telescope designed to study our sun. "SDO is our 'Hubble for the sun,'" says Lika Guhathakurta, a NASA scientist, in a statement released Wednesday. NASA says SDO will play a critical role in helping scientists understand our nearest star more thoroughly, as well as its effect on our planet.”

De N4CD....you have to see the images/movies . Maybe it will allow scientists to figure out where the missing sunspots are right now!!

State QSO Parties II

Georgia – GA QSO Party

Wow – good one if you had the propagation. Mobiles were running all over the place – W3DYA, N0TW, KN4Y, KC4HW, K4ZGB, W4NZ, NM2L on cw plus a few only SSB. The county hunters were out in force – AB7RW, WB2ABD, KS5A, W4GNS, N0ZA, K4XI, WD4OIN, NU0Q, KD8HB, N5XG, WD6CKT, K7REL, W0NAC, W0GXQ, K9EN, as well as the regular testers – N2CU, NO5W, AD5WI, W8WVU, WB8JUI, N6MU, W0BH, etc.

It looks like about 149/150 of the Georgia 159 counties were on the air during the QSO party, on either SSB or CW – sometimes only for a few minutes as mobiles were zipping along.

Here in TX, it seems that only ‘far GA’ was there on 20M sometimes, and during the day, NIL on 40M till late in the afternoon or in the evening – but then many simply went to 80M and not much action on 40M. I still got 8 of the ones I needed, missed half a dozen – just no propagation any band, and never saw the ones spotted – not that I would have heard them. I’m still happy to knock off 8 more, leaving 15 to go. There were giant pile ups on 40M – whew! I’m sure the mobiles were struggling with the LOUD signals but working them quickly despite the conditions.

There were at least 20 fixed stations on, with N4PN, N4NX, K2UFT, - county hunters at one time, and the testers in Cherokee County (half a dozen – some with real big sigs!), , many others running from home or guest stations – lots to choose from.

W4GNS (VA) : “85 GA counties worked during the QP, and not 1 single new county, how is that for luck?”

W3DYA/M : I just wanted to explain about my problem with CW in case anyone thought I might be getting old and forgetting how to send CW.

Two things happened: first my K5 keyer lost the settings and I didn't bring the manual. Fortunately, Jerry (W0GXQ) rescued me with a few things I really needed to make it work (I even talked to him on a cell phone... desperate!).

Then I had a problem with the "dit" paddle of my Bencher. I adjusted and even switched paddles without success. That's the way it was the entire contest and it was really frustrating.

I got home late yesterday, so today I got my keyer settings list and changed one setting. Never mind which one. Not only did the keyer work better, the problem with the paddle disappeared. As I suspected, the keyer wasn't set right and didn't get my "dit" unless it was just right. Don't ask me why! Anyway, my apologies especially to those whose calls contain a "C", like N9CK. I don't think I got the "9C" combination right even once. There were many others, too. By the end of the contest, I was beating the "dit" paddle very hard... but it survived!

Thanks to the fixed stations for hanging around and fighting the pileups. Mobiles "make" these contests, but without all those fixed stations we might as well stay home. “

De N4CD: Bet you a cup of coffee it was the Mode A vs Mode B Iambic keyer setting. One completes the dash before allowing you to send a dit, the other will accept a dit while the dash is completing..... Or the ‘dit memory’ on/off.

K4XI (FL) Needed 32, got 16 all on 40M. Skip too long on 20M.

W4YDY(NC) Worked 39 GA stations, but worked 2 in the last county I needed!

KM6HB(CA): “Propagation was better on Sunday. 21 worked, 18 new towards 2nd time and 1st time all cw.”

WB2ABD(NY) 248 CW 128 CWQ mults plus 38 SSB with 28 Mults - “There were times on Saturday when tuning 20 and 40, all three modes, and I could not find one GA signal. But hats off to W3DYA, KN4Y and K4BAI, who were ESP weak on 20m towards the end of the contest (I'm sure I was

too) and still made contacts. Great ears in the mobile. NM2L was especially propitious in his route ... I don't know how many were left at the start, but I only need Talbot to finish 5th-time GA. I'm guessing I got about 30.”

KN4Y/M

“I put on my spare 40-meter resonator for the party. It had been in the van for years so I decided to use it. In Appling County, N8II said my 40-meter signal had gone sour. We stopped and the resonator had broken and was just hanging. County hunters can relate to a limp resonator. I put on a taped up spare.

Then in Telfair County I had to take my keyer apart and reset the CPU chip.

In Colquitt County I put on the 40-80-meter antenna, it checked out. We stopped for coffee. Then when I keyed the 706, nothing. Luckily I had a Icom 729 in the van I used on field day. I finally figured how to change to 80-meters and finished Saturday. Sunday I had no driver and worked each county until the pile up was gone.

After working Baker I started out of the parking lot and hit a hole, it whipped the van and there went my guy wires and my last 40-meter resonator. So I went home and had a brandy. I almost forgot, I made 917 QSO's and activated 28 counties. I have no idea how many multipliers. Like Norm said, thanks for working us mobiles in good and poor band conditions.”

From 3830 reflector

KJ4HYG – 313 CW QSO - (Fixed GA) : This was pretty much the most fun I've had in a contest in a long time. It may be because this is my first contest with my new FT-450, I scored the most I've ever scored in any contest, or because I didn't stick to the ol' S&P. Whatever the reason, I really do enjoy this contest and can't wait for next year's GQP.”

KC4HW/M - 113 CW Q: “A part time effort only on Sunday. My wife drove and we operated from Seminole, Decatur, Miller and Early Counties.

The 40m band and the activity was very good. We spent about 2 hours in the contest and about 2 hours traveling back and forth.

Used the pickup with a hustler mobile antenna and a 706MKII. Used the microKeyer, from MicroHam--it worked very well. The computer gave a little trouble with the mobile power supply. The plug kept wiggling out of the socket and would stop charging, which once caused the computer to go into hibernation mode, when it came back, I had to reboot to get everything to work properly. Also, during a pit stop, I closed the lid and the computer shutdown and I had to reboot to get all to work again. Otherwise all work very well. “

NM2L Mobile : “Another great GA QSO party. I may consider a driver or being a driver next year. I missed several turns while running counties. After dark it gets real tough. Still a great, great time. Thanks to all the folks out there who took the time to work me and to all the mobiles that made this one of the best QSO parties around. “

W0BH (KS) 284 CW 66 SSB Q - 132 CW Mults, 36 mults on SSB :
“Overall, I worked 97 unique calls and **137 counties** (132 on CW plus CHTM FRAN 284 CW 66 SSB Q, GWIN PICK and SCRE on SSB).

W4NZ Mobile

“Saturday-

Started the party from Dade County, in the parking lot at Covenant College atop Lookout Mountain (el. 2100 ft). Headed South through Walker, Chattooga and Floyd counties where Murphy caught up with us by crashing our logging computer at what seemed random intervals. By a process of elimination we found that RF was getting into the computer via the external keyboard's USB interface. Snap-on toroids would not fix it so we eliminated the external keyboard and used the laptop's. This sometimes made for interesting typing and explains why we would ask you to wait to get it straight (thanks!)

Well, Murphy threw up a roadblock, literally. There was a traffic accident which completely closed Route 5 so we had to pull out Erik's GPs and navigate a way around the accident. What the GPS didn't show were the several detours put up due to construction! Eventually we made it I-75,

So, after 10 hours we had 1129 QSO's in the log, covered 425 miles and 22 counties. But wait...Murphy was just getting warmed up, read on.

Sunday -

An absolutely georgous day! Starting in Catoosa County (1.5 miles from my QTH) we continued on through Whitfield, Murray, and Gilmer. Again, rates were good. Mark had 118 Q's the first hour. On to Fannin, Union, Towns, Rabun, Habersham Stephens, Franklin and Hart. Hart County...crossing I-85, the plan was to travel through Lavonia and into Hart just long enough to work the pileups and then backtrack to I-85, traveling Southwest to catch Banks and Jackson. It was in the middle of Lavonia that we got the first clue that Murphy wasn't done.

The van's engine quit while sitting at a traffic light right in the middle of town. It did restart, idling rough but we were able to drive the 5 or 6 miles into Hart county, stopping at a convenience store/gas station to check things out. Leaving the van idling (very roughly!) we continued to operate. At 1435Z we logged what turned out to be our last QSO as the van quit...fini...dead!

Checking the odometer's trip counter, 225 miles, it was our farthest point from Chattanooga on the planned trip. Naturally! Murphy! Ok, it's Sunday afternoon, we're stranded in the middle of nowhere with a dead vehicle.

Mark's a member of AAA so he got on the phone with them about arranging towing. I went into the store and asked the lady behind the counter if she knew of any mechanics that might be willing to take a look at our vehicle. She said she might and made some phone calls. So we wait. Around four o'clock two men drive up in a pickup and said they had been called by the lady in the store. The mechanic, a fairly young guy, had a T-shirt on that said "I can't hear you without a beer in my hand".

I was having thoughts that we were being rescued by Goober. (not to mention the \$\$\$\$ signs) But, at this point, I didn't care if it was Goober, Gomer and Barney, too, if they could fix the van. Around the same time a tow truck sent by AAA arrived. Adding more to the local flavor, the tow truck driver had his wife and young son with him. As for the van...after

doing some testing, taking the inside cowling off and checking the fuel line, the mechanic decides the fuel pump is gone. He made a call to a local O'Reilly auto parts and found a pump, we agreed on a price for his labor and it looked like we had a plan.

The tow truck loaded the van and followed the mechanic and all of us (in his extended cab pickup) to his home and "workshop"..umm..actually it was a concrete pad behind his "single-wide". We waited while his wife took the log chain off their female Pit Bull and put her inside the house. With the van sitting on the concrete pad, the mechanic's buddy was getting the vehicle ready to remove the fuel tank while we went to get the new pump. After returning with the needed parts, Mark, Erik and I could do nothing but hang around and watch.

Actually this turned out to be better than TV. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, these two guys seemed to know what they were doing, mechanically speaking that is. It got a bit interesting when, after removing the gas tank and partially draining it, one of them stood not 6 feet away smoking a cigarette. You could taste gas fumes from 15 feet away. Then there was the Natural Lite beer in the cuzzi holders and two shotgun blasts from a passing truck on the highway about dusk. Our friends didn't react at all to the gunshots.

Maybe that was just a celebration (instead of fireworks) and we just misunderstood their meaning <G>. Still, I was glad we were behind the house! With the new fuel pump, it was about 2330Z when the guys got the van cranked and running, idling a little rough still, but running nevertheless. Erik pointed to the time and said we might still get in a few more QSO's and another county.

Just then the van unexpectedly quit..and failed to start. Spirits sank!! This time it was traced to a very a dirty, clogged fuel filter, easily fixed.

With the filter cleaned, the van started with no problem, running smoothly...we looked at the time...almost exactly 0000Z!! Coincidence? Hmm.

After a "Thank you", handshake and the agreed monetary exchange with our new-found friends, we were rolling again. Unfortunately the QSO party had

ended about 15 minutes earlier. Well...there is always "next year". BTW, the ride home was totally uneventful.”

Transmitted Counties

One of the ‘counts’ that many county hunters track is how many counties they have ‘put out’ or made a contact from while in a county. There are 3077 counties overall, but many set intermediate goals along the way, such as putting out all the counties in their own state, then maybe the next state over, or putting out 500 counties. You can qualify for a free MARAC award by running all the counties in a state – The Ran All State (XX) . You can look on the MARAC database under different calls and see how many states they have earned the Ran All State award in.

Some work toward transmitting from all 3077. At least 10 have either reached that goal, or are getting very close. KB4XK only needs to run Hawaii to finish them all. KL1V is running section after section of the country having covered most areas already. Who is going to be next to run them all?

So what is a ‘transmitted county’? According to the MARAC rules, making a single contact from a county gets you credit for a ‘transmitted county’. You can do that by working a mobile running on net, or by a random contact on another net such as the 3905 net, in a state QSO party, by a schedule with a single station, or by trying to run that county on multiple bands and modes. Many might feel they haven’t ‘run the county’ unless they make a determined effort to get at least a few contacts in the log, or make a ‘run’ from the county preferably on the CHN frequencies.

Other county hunters out there get frustrated when they hear a mobile make a contact from a desperately needed county – say by working a mobile during that mobile’s run, with no way to work them. By the time the run is over, and you might be able to ask NC to ‘move a mobile’ (if you hear NC at

all or can get in between mobiles to ask), that needed mobile might be ‘out of the county’ or not listening any longer on that band. Or perhaps the mobile station only works NC, and disappears with ‘one’ contact in the log.

That often frustrates the heck out of those listening on net, too, or those waiting for a spot for last county to show up! Worse, some mobiles only work one band – you see a spot for a county 400 miles away on 20M, with no hope of propagation on 20M, and that mobile doesn’t bother to go to 40M, or perhaps you are out west, and you see the 40M spot and run back east, but there is no hope of working that mobile at high noon from 1500 miles away on 40M, but it might be easy on 20M – but the mobile seems to stay only on 40M. It seems that some mobiles are ‘stuck’ on one band. Needless to say, for those who can’t hear the mobile on that band – it can drive one nuts.

On the other hand, there are mobiles who run 4 bands – multi modes – making it a good chance you’ll get them on at least one band/mode. (disclaimer here – there are at least 30 active stations who are no longer ‘welcome’ on 14.336, so that is one reason for lots of 40M only SSB mobiles these days– a situation which has yet to resolve itself). That’s a loss to the entire county hunting community. In addition, 40M has been the best band for getting contacts for the past several years during the sunspot minimum. So you’ll find some who stay mainly on 40M, or might QSY to a frequency which is not ‘net frequency’ on 20M, or perhaps only run cw on multiple bands.

Often, those who go to put out entire states or sections of them want dozens or as many as they can get with the conditions and propagation – sometime running 30-40 or 50 contacts in a county – some on SSB, some on CW, some on PSK31. Some feel that if they didn’t have a ‘run’ or two in the county, actually trying to put it out for all that could hear them, and trying two or more bands, that they haven’t really ‘run that county’. So what is your take on this? Is ‘one’ really enough?

N4CD started out as primarily an SSB operator. Part of that was because I soon traveled a lot with Miss Ida, N2TPH, and she didn’t especially enjoy ‘that racket’ on CW, or my having to stop to run cw (back then) – hard to drive, operate cw, log, and be coordinated. That meant that for many years during the early 90s sunspot minimum, it was mostly 40M SSB, and a few QSOs maybe on 20M, and maybe a handful on 20cw. Having just one

antenna on 40M that covered both CW and SSB was not something I had, and even with a manual tuner that was a trick to get it to tune on 40cw, , and often at only a few watts radiated power likely.

So I didn't run on 40cw often, and that was long before the county hunters discovered 30M. It was usually 20 SSB, 40 SSB and 20 CW with occasional forays to 40cw.

There were NO spotting nets on the internet - so superhosts or W6RK back then....you actually had to listen to the county hunter frequencies – or in some cases, someone would call you with a ‘one ringer’ to tell you to get off your duff and turn on the radio! There seemed to be more radios actually on and listening day and night then.

One time I flew up to NY, and discovered I had no key with me – this was ‘way way back’ when I seldom went on cw. Someone needed a LC in VT on cw and we were going to run a few there. I wound up making a key from an old hacksaw blade, two screws and a small piece of wood, and a knob from the top of a small can of 3 in 1 oil or something similar. The radio at the time was a Kenwood TS-50 that had no built in keyer, either! It was crude, but it made the necessary cw contacts – hi hi. For normal operation, I used an external keyer (MFJ econo-keyer) and a set of paddles to do a bit more cw. I did more and more cw as time went on. Later, most of the rigs such as the IC706 and IC 7000 had built in electronic keyers, so that made it even easier to get on cw.

Then came the ruckus on 14.336, where NC starting running dozens of stations off net frequency, and I decided that I and many others could have a lot of fun on CW and on 40M SSB. Miss Ida, N2TPH had passed away a few years before, so I was usually solo. I put a separate 40M hamstick on a mag mount and ran on 40SSB then with it, and tuned the main resonator to 7038.5, the frequency in use at the time. Now, we have moved up the cw net to 7056.5

It took me about 8-9 years of county hunting to get to all 3077 counties. While N2TPH and I were a team, she spent summers in NY, spring and fall in TX, and winters in FL. I drove her back and forth, and we could cover lots of counties each time that we had not run before. In addition, a few trips like going from TX to the National in Phoenix, then back to NY put a lot of

transmitted counties into the log. (Naturally we also had 2M handhelds to fill in missing needed counties ourselves).

If we had the opportunity, we ran on net, moved off frequency, or in most cases tried to put out the county for others. Maybe in a few percent, say 1% or 30 counties, we only had a contact with the mobile that was currently running, or only had a few before we ran out of the county and could not stop before that happened. I always tried to make at least one HF contact per county – and sometimes that was very difficult, having to work a random CQer, a DX station, a contesting station, etc, just to get a contact or two in the log after trying 20 and 40M SSB and CW frequencies early in the mornings or late in the evenings. When you travel solo, you get desperate and work a DX station, or random CQer – anything you can find if nothing is on the county hunter frequencies. About 98% of the time, I made a contact on the county hunter frequencies – sometimes over 100 of them from the rare ones like Second AK or Hawaii counties.

A few business trips to the left coast or Northwest US helped out, too – being able to keep a rental car over a weekend and put 1000 miles on it in two days let me run a few states or sections of the country that way. The annual trek to Dayton or the convention or the 3M mini also gave other opportunities to go run some ‘off the beaten path’ counties while getting to and from the conventions – usually taking an extra 500 or 1000 miles to get to Dayton or wherever.

I remember one evening when I was trying to get to the motel, and the band had nearly died completely due to a solar flare. I begged one station to stick around 15 minutes (he was 33 copy) so I would have ‘a contact’ when I passed through the next one. There were also counties I went to, but could not work anyone! After 2 hours, I gave up – all the bands had died, there wasn’t a single signal on 40/30/or 20M! I called and called, looked for any CQ to answer – desperation, but I had a schedule to keep and could not stay longer. Santa Cruz, AZ was one of them, and I had to take a 300 mile detour to get it on another trip! I’d happily have settled for just one contact in that case.

Back when the broadcast was present on 40M SSB, you’d fight to get a single contact in the morning or evenings. We’d share the frequency with the Classroom net, and they took over after the Rotten Apples. Then, at 6pm central, the Rotten Apples would take over again, leaving the County

Hunters with no place to go, and often some of the really rotten apples would insist on a pre-net starting at five, or four, or whenever they felt lonely. Ah, things are better on 40M these days, thanks to band expansion and the removal of most of the broadcasters from the band. And now with 30M, and some county hunting activity on 80M (3556.5), there are more possibilities for a contact or ten.

Even better – when you are desperate, you can now self-spot if you have mobile internet or text capability – or if you have a cellphone, call someone who can get on and give you a contact. Joyce, N9ST1, often helped out when I desperately needed a MP contact – a quick call and if she was available we would find a frequency that worked and make a quick contact – that saved me at least a dozen times! That wasn't an option 20 years ago for most! Occasionally you might also see a spot where the NC station spots the mobile, like N4CD 7188 Potter, PA (Needs MP contact) – maybe alerting one of the folks to get on for a quick contact. That too has helped, and sometimes I'd get on to help out a mobile in need for a qualifying contact. When county hunters get desperate, there are now multiple means to help out – but that still leaves you a few where there is no NC, the bands are squirrely and you are just 'out of luck' for getting a contact in a county.

Every county hunter, whether brand new, or one who has been around for 10-20-30 years can be working on the Ran All XX State awards, or accumulating transmitted counties for other awards, such as Master Gold. For MG, you can use 1500 transmitted counties as the second part of the requirements for that award, where you need to accumulate 1500 'points'. You can run the same county multiple times on different days, too, for those 1500 points.

Recently, Rick, KG4NNK and Sheila, KI4GKA team decided to run all of Kentucky. Taking a different section of the state on different weekends, they ran everything over a year period. Jerry, W0GXQ, has knocked off half a dozen states around him with his various trips and received the RAN award for them.

The ultimate goal for the really active mobile is to run them all – but that's a big quest – over 175,000 miles of driving and lots of time on the road. Many will settle for having run all the counties in six or eight nearby states. Then who knows?

So how many contacts should one need to really count a ‘transmitted county’? Is one on 2M FM sufficient? Is just one contact with the mobile running, with no attempt to move off frequency to give it to others the way to go? Is just working NC and not moving off frequency acceptable for a ‘transmitted county’? What’s your take on this? For each, I guess the decision is up to them when to count a ‘transmitted county’.

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Now for an interesting twist. Way way back when, about the time the USA-CA program started – there was another group called the Certificate Hunters Club – CHC. For those awards for working counties in a state – you could claim credit toward that award for yourself if you transmitted from a county. That no longer applies toward most of the awards these days, especially USA-CA, Bingo, Prefixes, USA-CW, etc. However, it does apply to some MARAC awards under certain circumstances!

Now why would MARAC do that? Imagine that only a few dozen people had the Bingo award – which is the way it started out in the timeframe when the MG award was started around 1994. If you were to run hundreds of counties, in rare parts of the country, you would help them out, but would not get credit toward your own award. So the original creators of the Master Gold award (story in previous issue of the CHNews) came up with concept that you could get credit yourself for the county you were in IF you worked someone else with Bingo from that county (after you had received your Bingo number, too). Otherwise, there would be no incentive for mobiles with Bingo to go run counties for others, and wait until someone ran those same counties again so he/she could work it for credit!

That concept was carried over to the Master Platinum award. In the beginning, when the award was started, only a few had the required MG award to give a qualifying contact. Those mobiles who ventured out with MG might have to wait a long time for someone else to run the counties they had just run – but the mobile was giving qualifying contacts to everyone on the air at the time. So, the tradition of letting you claim credit for the county yourself continued – if you worked someone with MG from the county. That often proved to be a challenge, since at the beginning there were only a handful with MG – now it’s up to a few dozen so it gets easier. But it’s not always that easy if none are around when you hit a county that you would like credit for. Take it from N4CD – I ran through at least 300

counties when no one was around to help out at the beginning of my start on MP. In addition, you have to put out 500 counties – 1/6th of the USA, with a ‘qualifying contact’ for Master Platinum. For most, that means at least a half dozen states nearby or the equivalent – worse if you are out west!

Of course, for the MG award, you only have to work one station (if that station has a bingo award). You could work net control and then disappear, not running it for others. That got you credit and a ‘transmitted county’. Not a friendly way to do it, but a few did/are working on it that way for one reason or another, not running but maybe 1/3rd of the counties they travel through. The spirit of county hunting is putting out those counties for all that can work you – as many as you can. Fortunately, most do make the effort – that’s the ‘county hunter way’.

Same for MP. One or two mobiles out there are happy with getting ‘their’ qualifying contact for MP by working ‘a’ person with MG, then disappearing or not moving off frequency to run the county. That’s not ‘the county hunter way’.

We’ll see where this goes. Meanwhile, N4CD mobile will still be out and about. 300 more counties to get to for Second Time Xmit from all of them, but that’s likely 26,000 miles of driving or more to get them all, plus some airplane trips. It’s not easy! If I started tomorrow, I guess I could be done in less than 3 months, but I’d never see home.

I just sent in a bunch of data for the RAS award in a dozen more states, having finished them up a while back on previous trips. Gene, W1TEE, has Second Time RAS for the states – he’s the only county so far to have transmitted from all of them (3077/3076) twice. Maybe someday I’ll catch up. He set a hard precedent to follow!

So how are YOU coming on finishing up those states? Or running your home state for the Nth time? Or getting those last counties so others get their awards and running up your last county total? Got one of those nice 25 last county plaques on your wall? Or the bigger ones?

On the Road with N4CD Part III

The Belton, TX Hamfest was coming up. This one is held twice a year in Bell County which is 150 miles south of my home QTH (Collin County). It starts early in the morning on Saturday (flea market at 6am, inside at 7am). The event is held large facility at the County Fair grounds – you can drive in and unload your stuff, so lots of boat anchors, loads of parts, and lots of miscellaneous stuff shows up. In addition, there is usually a thriving outside flea market, although it can get mighty hot under the TX sun and things are usually over by 10am.

The trip down was uneventful. I left at 1pm to avoid rush hour, but still hit a half hour creep and crawl at 5 mph style backup trying to get through the middle of Dallas. Then it was down I-35. There were a few counties I ran often that I didn't meet my goal of getting a contact with a MP holder before, and that was going to be a goal of the trip.

There aren't too many active MP holders on these days – Scottie, N4AAT, Joyce, N9STL, and Gene, K5GE. Darrel, W6TMD, has been chasing DX lately and not on the net, Ray, WG6X has been on injured reserve list for a while and not much mobiling, and Bob, N8KIE is still on vacation and not doing much county hunting. So that can make it a challenge. Then again, why not a challenge?

I needed one county (Hill) for my new goal on the way down, and got it. Stopped to run it to run all the bands. (no action on 17M these days, and even less on 15m).

Friday afternoon late, I went over the hamfest, and checked out the folks setting up outside, and inside. You can usually get inside with no problem on Friday afternoon, but only 25% of the goodies are there, but it's a good time to yak and meet some old friends.

K5AX, Tom, who lives along the TX Gulf coast, was there. He used to get on every now and then mobile on CW. You'd better crank up your ears since he zips along at 30wpm or so. He's only running a single Ameritron amp these days putting out 500 watts into a screwdriver antenna. In his previous Tahoe, he ran a pair of them for 800W out! We talked about the

new ‘no star’ award, so perhaps you’ll occasionally hear him on. He goes over to New Orleans occasionally. (with his call he is also good for bingo everywhere, too).

I left after an hour – after buying a 80M Hustler Resonator for \$13.25. You don’t see too many of them at hamfests – most are 75M and that isn’t too useful for a cw op. There were some interesting goodies. I saw a Hallicrafters S-38C sell for 20 bucks. There was a Star Roamer Receiver for 25 bucks. (novice type stuff from the 50s/60s). There was also some nice Collins gear for sale if you are into that but no bargains. Now, I usually just look at stuff, or take pictures of it. I don’t need more projects and my bench is full of other stuff. I headed back to the Motel 6 in Temple and dined at the Denny’s next door.

As I watched the weather on the TV Friday night, Saturday didn’t look promising. They were talking ‘flash flood’ watches for everything to the west and north, with 3-6 inches of rain possible by Sunday evening. Hmmm. So far so good, but the weather map said plan for rain. And more rain. In some parts of the “Hill Country”, the rural roads cross streams multiple times. You’ll see ‘flood gauges’ in the low spots – and you can literally get stranded for a day or two on these type roads. Most of them lie to the southwest from Temple. I was planning on the major roads that usually don’t flood.

Saturday morning I walked over to the Denny’s next door to the Motel 6 where I stayed. It was drizzling a bit at 6am. After breakfast I headed over the hamfest – about 10 miles away and got there at 6:45. It was drizzling on and off, and they had a line of 150 people out in the drizzle waiting to get in at 7am. You never know – some years they let folks in at 6:30. This year it was 7:02. A lot of hams were wet by the time they got in.

It took me about an hour to see everything inside. One ham had a large pile of Hustler stuff and some hamsticks. He said ‘Please – take all of it for \$20’. I probably won’t use most of the stuff, but I got two Hustler fold over masts, two 40M Newtonics resonators, a 15m Hustler high power resonator, a 20m resonator, a 17M hamstick, a 22 inch mast, a 54 inch mast, a nice coil spring, a 3 way adapter plate, 3 or 4 CB whips, and some mystery stuff. That was all I bought after checking out all the other stuff in the flea market.

There was a Multi-Elmacs AF-67 Transciter and matching receiver for sale, a Gonset converter, but not much else early mobile stuff. One SB-101 unit, a Heathkit portable solid state receiver circa 1967, but not much else in the way Heathkit stuff. A few WW2 surplus ARC 5s, maybe 15 pieces of Collins, from a complete S line to 75A4 receivers and everything in between except for high power amps. Some solid state gear. Oh, I saw the Hallicrafters HT-40 transmitter and matching receiver – nice condition if you are a nostalgia buff. A few very vintage Hallicrafters and National receivers were for sale. Not much in the way of late model HF rigs, and not a single used screwdriver antenna for sale. I'd guesstimate 3000 people were there, with 200 people selling things. There are NO programs – this is simply a giant twice a year swap meet.

With the constant drizzle, the outdoor flea market was 'rained out' for the day. I headed west to take the 'county hunter' way home. Kent, KL1V was running in NY. I got him in 2 I needed, but missed him in two others. It's hard being mobile, not having the spots, putting out the counties. For all I know, I was running the county and he ran it on a different band or he moved down 2 so I never knew. Not to worry – others will run those I missed, and glad to get the two I got. I ran over to Coryell (good for Natural Bingo there), then the county line of Burnet/Lampasas – I've been there 20 times it seems, but there are always new awards and folks chasing counties. Maybe there 40 times?

Contacts were sparse. I noted I only got spotted a few times on a few bands the whole Saturday (not good). Once the MI QSO Party started up, I heard all the county hunters working the MI stations. Well, I needed 4 in upper Michigan and K8IR was going to run them, so I listened for him as well – hi hi. Heard the regular QSO party folks (N6MU, NO5W, DL3DXX, OH3JF, W0BH, etc) plus the county hunters going after them.

Silver, N9QS was running in OH and PA (caught him in 2 I needed), and Barry, N0KV was in CO (along with Pat, N0DXE on SSB), while Sterling WA7JHQ was out in UT/ID. Often, there was NO ONE listening on 30M. No one spotting either. I worked Barry and Sterling a few times on 30M – it's like we had the band to ourselves. Of course, with 20 identical return trips from the Bell County hamfest over the years, likely most 'don't need it' on 30M, so that might be part of the reason, but I suspect most were chasing those MI counties on 20M/40M or in the pile up working KL1V and other mobiles.

Well, the windshield wipers ran all day the entire way so it made for a dreary driving day that took extra care. Temp in the 60s. I had actually put the shorts in the overnight bag, but not this trip! I stopped to run Hamilton/Bosque, and then Hood/Johnson, and then Parker – then continued home – with it raining or drizzling the entire way. When I got close to home, the rain stopped.

The MI QSO Party was on, and between county lines, I'd be hunting for the 6 counties I needed in MI. Never did hear Manistee run, but got the others either mobile, or when I got home and the contest continued till the wee hours of the morning.

I did get the contacts with the MP holders on the way back, so that's a few more counties I can add to my informal list of 'worked a MP holder from XX county' along with trying for contacts on 2 or more bands – although it was a struggle at times without being spotted on most bands. (thanks to K5GE, N9STL, and N4AAT). Since I was stopped, I ran 20cw, 30cw and 40cw/SSB – tried 17m a few times with only one contact in 2 days. Flux just too low right now. You could count the 30M contacts for the return trip with one hand – sad state of affair for that nice band. If you don't get spotted on this band, you work the 2 or 3 stations who actually listen to 30M or QSY there from 20M after your run on their own. Without spots, this is a sparse QSO band. Maybe I just need to head to rare counties?

This trip I had five resonators up on the 6 foot mast – 40cw, 30 (new Hustler resonator), 20, 17 and 15M. Seems to work well, but 40 detuned a bit in heavy rain. I also had a mag mount with 40M SSB hamstick. Same ole IC706.

Next major trip – Dayton coming up in May. Golly, I need lots of those counties for a MP holder contact. I'm just going to have to help get a few more finished up for Master Platinum, so they'll be there to give me a contact!

New Element Discovered

On the science news front! (Got to keep up with those kids and grandkids)

New super-heavy element discovered that points towards 'strange materials of the future'

“Physicists have discovered a new super-heavy element that had been labeled a nuclear 'missing link' by scientists.

The element 117 is roughly 40 per cent heavier than lead and has been given the temporary name ununseptium, which refers to its atomic number.

Researchers believe the element points towards a concoction of more massive and stable elements that could be used to create strange and unpredictable new materials.

A team of American and Russian scientists produced six atoms of the elusive element in a particle accelerator, by smashing calcium atoms with another rare, heavy element known as berkelium

The discovery of element 117 fills in the final square on the Periodic Table of observed elements up to 118.

The Periodic Table, which hangs in science classrooms around the world, arranges all the known chemical elements according to their atomic number. This number reflects how many protons they have in their nucleus.

Like all super-heavy atoms, element 117 is unstable and lasts for only a fraction of a second before self-destructing in a cascade of lighter elements and particles.

The team deduced its fleeting existence by studying the daughter particles emitted as the atom decayed.

However, the researchers said their data supported the theory that super-heavy elements yet to be discovered could inhabit an 'Island of Stability.'

As newly created elements become heavier and heavier, scientists believe they will become far more stable than the fragments of synthetic matter produced so far.

Team member Dawn Shaughnessy from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory told The New York Times that these new super-heavy stable elements could one day be used to generate an array of strange new materials with as yet unimagined scientific and practical uses.

A paper describing the discovery has been accepted for publication in *Physical Review Letters*.”

Source: : <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1264126/New-super-heavy-element-Periodic-Table-Russia-U-S-scientists.html#ixzz0kqGgG73M>

Russian chemistry professor Dmitri Mendeleev organized the first modern periodic table in 1869 with rows and columns to reflect the element properties and how they interact with one another. He is credited with developing the first table that organized the 63 then known elements into groups and left some spaces blank for those whose existence he not yet prove. In 1913, physicist Henry Mosely’s experiments showed definitively that the order was dependent not upon atomic weight but on atomic number – the number of protons in an atom’s nucleus.

Like most of the elements after uranium, ununseptium is artificially made, leading to the supposition that yet undiscovered stable elements exist, and no one knows for sure if there is an end point to the table or additionally artificially engineered elements will be found and added.

Silver Finishes Up Prefixes

Ray, WA5OPO, sent in the following pic – he made a trip out to Van Zandt, TX to give Silver, N9QS, the last ‘W’ prefix



WA50PO/m at Van Zandt, TX – LC for “W” Prefix for N9QS

It was a good month for Silver. He also finished up the N prefix award, too!

Loose Clicks Sink Ships

So you think no one is watching you enter your User Name and Password, right? That no one is going to find it out. Well, it turns out science has gone steps beyond that now! By the way, if you don't recognize the heading, you haven't watched enough WW2 British war movies lately – that was the slogan to re-enforce the idea that talking about secrets or work assignments or military locations could endanger ships, planes or other military operations –spies were everywhere trying to extract information.

“CLATTERING keyboards may seem the white noise of the modern age, but they betray more information than unwary typists realize. Simply by

analyzing audio recordings of keyboard clatter, computer scientists can now reconstruct an accurate transcript of what was typed—including passwords. And in contrast to many types of computer espionage, the process is simple, requiring only a cheap microphone and a desktop computer. Such snooping is possible because each key produces a characteristic click, shaped by its position on the keyboard, the vigor and hand position of the typist, and the type of keyboard used. But past attempts to decipher keyboard sounds were only modestly successful, requiring a training session in which the computer matched a known transcript to an audio recording of each key being struck.

Now, in a blow to acoustic security, Doug Tygar and his colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley, have published details of an approach that reaches 96% accuracy, even without a labeled training transcript. The new approach employs methods developed for speech-recognition software to group together all the similar-sounding keystrokes in a recording, generating an alphabet of clicks. The software tentatively assigns each click a letter based on its frequency, then tests the message created by this assignment using statistical models of the English language. For example, certain letters or words are more likely to occur together—if an unknown keystroke follows a “t”, it is much more likely to be an “h” than an “x”. Similarly, the words “for example” make likelier bedfellows than “fur example”. In a final refinement, the researchers employed a method many students would do well to deploy on term papers: automated spellchecking.

This sort of acoustic analysis might sound like the exclusive province of spies and spooks, but according to Dr Tygar, such attacks are not as esoteric as you might expect. He says it is quite simple to find the instructions needed to build a parabolic or laser microphone on the web. You could just point one from outside through an office window to make a recording. And as he points out, would-be eavesdroppers might not even need their own recording equipment, as laptop computers increasingly come equipped with built-in microphones that could be hijacked.

To protect against these sonic incursions, Dr Tygar suggests a simple remedy: turn up the radio. His computers were less successful at parsing recordings made in noisy rooms. Ultimately, though, more sophisticated recording arrays could overcome even background noise, rendering any typed text vulnerable. Dr Tygar therefore recommends that typed passwords be phased out, to be replaced with biometric checks or multiple types of

authorization that combine a password with some form of silent verification (clicking on a pre-chosen picture in a selection of images, for example)

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Source: The Economist

State QSO Parties III

Michigan QSO Party

This was another well attended event with lots of mobiles putting out the counties. At least 60 counties were activated.

From K3IMC forum:

W8JJ/M:

“I ran 11 counties in 12 hours for a total of 383 QSO's and 69 multipliers which includes other MI counties and US states. There were 370 QSO's on 20/40/80 CW and 13 on 40m SSB. I did not have time to run phone and travel the 249 miles needed to hit 11 counties during the contest window. I worked a lot of county hunters and want to thank you for the multipliers and the points!

I tried a different mobile set up for this contest. I used an Elecraft K3, MicoKeyer II interface, N1MM contesting software on my netbook PC with a wireless keyboard. I simply positioned the keyboard between my stomach and the steering wheel and computer logged as if I were home running the contest. Of course, I was parked during my runs as I think typing and driving is a bad idea. The antenna used was the HI-Q 5/80 motorized screw driver style with a capacitance hat and 3' whip.

I used Street Atlas 10 on the laptop to keep an eye on county lines and the TomTom GPS for street level navigating. In combination, these are great

tools for navigating very efficiently among the counties. Before the contest, I used MapQuest to plan my route and created a spreadsheet that detailed every move. For example, I would determine the travel time to each county and deduct it from the operating time each hour in my plan. Once I arrived in a targeted county I would set a timer for the predetermined length of my stay which ranged from 24-40 minutes per county. When the timer beeped I immediately terminate the run and moved to the next county. I was able to run three bands in all counties during daylight. I limited my evening operation to 40/80 as I was working coast to coast and DX.”

From 3830 reflector:

WI9WI mobile:

“Four of the past five years I've done the MIQP in the UP starting from my cabin in Sawyer Co Wisconsin. From there the drive just to get into MI is about 90 mins. I've done a variation of the same 7 western UP counties during those times. I didn't do it last year because I had done a lot of driving in the WIQP in March, plus hit a deer to the tune of \$3000 on the way back to the cabin after it was over. I just didn't feel like doing another 800 plus miles of driving.

This year I decided to do it again. I jumped at Scott, NE9U's offer to stay at his place in Long Lake, WI the night before. He is only 13 miles from MI there. After a bit of consultation with him and N9EN before driving up I decided to make the long drive from Long Lake to KEWE to start the contest. I've always wanted to do this, but was put off by the long drive. It was expected I'd be the only activity from that county. N9EN and NE9U would operate from the other counties in the UP.

I left Madison on Friday about 1:30 PM, and made the 276 mile drive to NE9U's place in about 4 and a half hours. For you wildlife fans I saw a very large Grey Wolf between Rhinelander and Crandon on US 8. I arrived just after NE9U and Art, N9BCA did. Todd, N9EN was already there. We went to dinner at the Brule River Lodge and then went to bed. We were up early and I left at 7 AM.

The drive to KEWE was 130 miles and took 3 hours with a stop in Houghton, MI for gas, coffee, and a look at my maps. I found a nice little

park about 2 miles inside the county line and set up the radio and antennas. Initial set up takes about 20 minutes, and takedown and set up between operating locations takes about 8 minutes each. I use a Bugcatcher mounted on my roof rack for 40 and 80, and a mag mounted Hustler for 20. Unless I am driving a short distance between operating positions I take them down for driving on the highway. The tip of the Bugcatcher is quite high and has caught on overhanging trees in the past. Plus, I don't guy it.

The radio is an IC-7000 with an LDG 7000 tuner. CW is with a microham keyer and the computer is an Acer netbook. Though I can walk and chew gum at the same time, I cannot operate and log safely while moving, so all operation is while sitting in parks, boat landings or occasionally by the roadside on non-busy roads.

The others and I made a plan to start on 80 for a few minutes to give them a shot at KEWE. Before the contest I worked W8CAR/M on 80, and then never heard him again. The first QSO was with a very weak N9NE/M in IRON on 80 CW, about 70 miles distant. We tried SSB, but couldn't make it. I never heard him again, nor did I ever hear NE9U. I heard nothing else on 80 and quickly went to 40. I planned to stay in KEWE for at least 2 hours to give as many people as possible a shot at it. After a couple of QSO's

I started having RF get into the computer causing it to lock up. Troubleshooting revealed that the Bugcatcher had tilted over almost onto the roof of my Subaru in a very strong wind. Tightening up the mount solved that problem. I ended up staying 2 hrs and 30 minutes and made 102 QSOs including a nice run of 25 on 40 SSB. I only made 2 other SSB QSOs the whole contest. The loudest station I worked all day was KD8JAM about 3 miles south of me in HOUGH on 40 SSB.

I packed up and made the 46 mile drive to near the HOUGH/ONTO line. This took about an hour and 23 minutes including take down, setup and driving through Houghton/Hancock. I spent an hour there and made 46 QSOs before moving about a mile down the road into ONTO. There I made 44 QSOs in 49 minutes.

By now it was 6 hours into the test. I had a dinner date with my friends on Augustine Lake east of Glidden, WI for 8:30 or 9 PM local, so I packed up and moved on to GOGÉ at a wayside on US 2 just west of Bessemer. It took close to 2 hours to drive the 75 miles with a stop for coffee. I spent about 30

minutes there and made 25 QSOs. Activity seemed to dwindle as the day went on. After KEWE I had no luck on phone in spite of calling CQ on 40 and 20 from each county. The only 2 SSB QSOs outside of KEWE were moves from CW.

I finally started to hear signals on 80 CW in GOGA but had no luck working anyone for about 10 minutes. I finally quit and packed up when I realized that I was having RF problems into the radio on 80 because I forgot to change the tap point on the Bugcatcher coil when switching from 40. By now I had been on the road over 12 hours and was quite tired.

I packed up and made the 62 mile drive to my friends, arriving at 2100L about 2 hours before the end of the contest after 319 miles and 14 hours on the road. A quick shower, a few 807s and dinner put a good cap on the day.

The next day after breakfast I drove the 55 miles to our place in Sawyer Cty and picked up a 20 m HyGain 204BA I'm selling to AI9L. I then drove home to Madison arriving about 6 PM.

Statistics:

KEWE 102 QSOs in 2.5 hrs

HOUG 46 QSOs in 1.0 hr

ONTO 44 QSOs in 0.8 hr

GOGA 25 QSOs in 0.5 hr

Total miles driven 910, about 4.5 per QSO Total time in car, about 24.5 hrs

I made about half the number of QSOs in roughly the same amount of operating time as I did in the WIQP 4 weeks earlier. Forty seemed good. Twenty was OK but signals were weak. Eighty was non existent, though I quit before sunset.”



WI9WI

NE9U Mobile

“Since I was on spring break with the XYL and kids during WQP, Art (N9BCA) and I decided to give Michigan a try this year. (It also helped that I now have a cabin 12 miles from the Michigan border...this may become an annual affair!)

Going into the contest, our expectations were not very high, and we did not meet them. hi

Compared to our usual MinnQP and WQP mobile efforts, this seemed like pulling teeth. Our rates stayed low on CW and on SSB we never could do anything CQ'n and got CQ'd in the face calling people. Ughh..... But if we do this again next year, we already have plans for a more productive route and better antennas.

Thanks to Art N9BCA for his driving (we've been doing this for about 15 years now). Thanks to WI9WI and N9NE for bunking with us Friday night. We had a great steak dinner and accomplished a lot of BS'n. We took lots of pictures of the 3 vehicles and ops if anyone is interested in seeing them.”



N9CBA

NE9U

WI9WI

N9NE

NE9U Mobile

“On Friday afternoon, I drove about 160 miles from my QTH in Amherst, WI up to NE9U's cottage just a few miles south of MI-WI line where Scott had graciously invited me and Jim, WI9WI, to join him and his driver, Art, N9BCA. We had a nice meal at a local watering hole and enjoyed talking about ham radio and our respective routes and strategies over a few 807s before hitting the sack.

Art woke us up at around 6 am ... it was below freezing and very windy. After coffee and 'good luck' wishes, we dispersed to our starting points. Jim had a long drive north to the Keweenaw Peninsula to activate KEWE, and I had a 65 mile jaunt to far northern IRON, just a few yards short of BARA. My strategy this year was to cut down on the mileage, as I cannot safely radio, log contacts on the laptop, and drive at the same time (although I did make a few SSB Qs while in motion). I ran just five counties: IRON, BARA, HOUG, ONTO, and GOGÉ and drove only 62 miles during the contest, parking off-road to make my contacts (the last three hours were spent in the Lac Vieux Desert Casino parking lot :).

The two plus hours per county gave me ample time to pursue county multipliers. I employed two Hamsticks for 40 and 75 SSB, as well as the main three-band Hustler arrangement for the CW frequencies. This allowed me to quickly switch from CW to Phone with the K3. The antennas were all mag-mounted atop the minivan and guyed. The stinger on the 80M Hustler was 13'8" above the road surface, so I was always on the lookout for low branches and bridges. It is remarkable to see how many bridges do not have the clearance marked on them.

As many have pointed out, 20M was good for a while, 40M was so-so, and 80-75M was the workhorse band. I was able to grab a number of MI counties but suspect that the long skip -even on 80- limited access mostly to the southern portion of the lower peninsula.

I was pleased to have a number of strong EU stations call me. And I continue to be amazed at K8MR's apparent ability to run, and search and pounce at the same time! Thanks to Jim's calls, we were able to add a number of county mults on both CW and SSB.

The 155 mile drive home was uneventful, a radical departure from the past few years which were dominated by fog, mist, rain, and even a T-storm or two. Although there were many eyes peering out from the side of the road, none came out to meet me.

K8MR mobile

“Another nice visit to Michigan. The weather was colder than the past few years and rather windy, but it was a good day for everyone else to be playing radio and not mowing their lawns. I often see my last snow of the year on my MiQP trip, in some shady areas in the very north. This year we saw snow, but in the form of a few flurries in the air.

This year with K8IR covering the northern part of the lower peninsula we were able to do a nice compact route around the central lower peninsula. I successfully used the "gray line" mode of route planning: if a non-numbered road is shown on the state road map (as a gray road) it is probably a decent road. Found a nice such shortcut through Alcona and an good efficient route through Kalkaska and Missaukee. I needed to be back to Cleveland for some early family events on Sunday, so we ended the contest closer to Ohio than in most years. Sort of a waste putting on common places like Livingston and Washtenaw, but I couldn't afford to end up any further north.

The sunspots that have been around most of the year of course disappeared for MiQP, but still conditions seemed pretty good by recent year standards. 40 was a bit shorter, with guys in places like Indy and Cleveland being loud for much of the day. But most of the rest of MI was missing on 40.

However we were prepared with both 80 and 75 available full time, and on 80 CW with the help of the mobile frequency on 3545 we were able to find some activity throughout the day, and move most of those guys to SSB. Worked N9NE several times, and W8CAR and WI9WI once each among the other mobiles.

It was fun watching, and being part of, the horserace between N4PN and N0IJ. Both were very good at finding me and moving me between modes. DL3DXX showed up a lot in my log, as did OM2VL. I even had three 80

meter qsos with OM2VL, and on the last one, ten minutes before the end, he was pushing S9 on my meter.

The bumper of the trip was a qso with a deer on M66 in Mecosta County around 0100z. Body shop estimate is \$2600 (covered by insurance), but luckily we were able to continue the drive home, carefully watching the temperature gauge all the way.

Our score was up about 10% from recent years, and if it holds up with log checking will be the second highest in my 11 years of MiQP mobile operations.”

K8IR mobile:

“We added over 100 QSOs to last year's total, helped by heading below the bridge for several extra counties. The mults were the same as last year. From the numbers, it looks like 40 wasn't as good as last year (nor anywhere close to what it was a month ago during WIQP), but a fairly quiet 80 meters made up for it. I probably erred in not getting to 80/75 earlier, but we had a lot of power line noise in the western and central U-P, and it was hard enough hearing on 40 and 20.

Murphy did visit as the computer locked up a few times mid-QSO, and then locked up for good in Antrim County. We lost about 25 minutes setting up the backup computer, which decided not to talk to the radio, so I decided to stay on 80 CW from that point on. Fortunately, there was plenty of business on 80 for the last 4 counties.

I suspect a lot of people needed ALPE, since the pileup was especially deafening in that county. Conditions were quite amazing on 80. OM2VL was as loud as many stateside stations, and DL3DXX wasn't far behind. Both were in the log 3 times on 80 in the last hour or so. N0IJ was tops in the log with 18 QSO's, one ahead of N6MU and WB2ABD. Amazingly DL3DXX was tied for 4th with W8EDU at 16. In all, we had over 40 DX QSO's in the log.

The trip was pretty uneventful, a little windy at the start. We saw a few deer, but fortunately they stared at us from the ditches. No exotic wildlife

this year. We did see quite a few law enforcement vehicles. On two occasions, state troopers in the U-P decided we were interesting enough to follow for several miles, but didn't stop us.”

Nostalgia

From the way back machine – nostalgia - passing by on Ebay – from the 1960s – some vintage ‘hamfest type’ gear. I don’t remember seeing this back when, but it was fairly rare – an Ameco R5 receiver for beginners – it was general coverage with bandspread to allow you to hopefully tune the ham bands. A later version, the R5a had a Q multiplier built in.



Ameco R-5 receiver

This was one of many ‘introductory’ SWL type receivers that were used by starting hams to try and get on the novice bands. In most cases, they had fairly marginal performance, fair cw reception – but usually no filtering or narrowing of the bandwidth for cw, no calibration/bandspread of the ham bands, etc.

This first generation of Short Wave Listener (SWL) receivers was a spin off of the “All American Five”(AA5) radio. Starting in the 1930s, manufacturers had tried to design the ‘perfect’ radio set for the consumer market. This meant in reality the one with the least cost of production.

What triggered the AA5 set was the invention of the Pentagrid Converter tube. This had five grids in it, and could be both oscillator and mixer. Technically, it was a ‘heptode’ with 7 elements, but it was always called a pentagrid. The oscillator was able to operate independently because one of the grids (grid 2) was connected into what would normally be the oscillator's anode (plate) circuit. Screen Grids were placed to separate the action of the Mixer section from the oscillator section. The output of the oscillator was electron coupled to the actual mixer. The makers described this as a virtual cathode. The RF signal was fed into the tube by Grid 4. The action of that

grid on the electron stream that already was varying at the local oscillator frequency produced the Sum and difference frequencies. The first tube was the 2A7(1934), followed by the 6A7, 6A8 in the 1939 time period, then the 12SA7 for series string sets, and later the miniature 12BE6 (1945). You had an IF amp, a detector/AVC, and audio tube.

Design quickly standardized on a five tube set, with one of the tubes a rectifier tube. It was designed to work directly off the line without a power transformer, using tubes that had filament voltages that totaled up to 120V – such as three 12V tubes, a 50C5 audio amp, and a 35W4 rectifier. ($3 \times 12 = 36$ plus 35 plus 50 = 121V). It was a single conversion receiver, and did a decent job for broadcast reception using a 455 KHz IF. It work easily work up to 30 MHz. The 12AD6 was a version that would work in 12V car radios with 12v on the plates. Tens of millions of AA5 broadcast sets were sold, and some had extra bands on them, such as the old police band at 1.7 MHz.

Other ‘higher grade’ radios had an r.f. pre-amp stage, maybe push pull audio output for more power and less distortion, and maybe even a ‘tuning eye’ circuit. Most manufacturers had low end radios, and a line of more expensive ones. Often, the wood cabinet/floor console was a higher part of the price of the unit than the radio chassis itself! Before TV sets, often the radio console was one of the main pieces of furniture in a living room, and people sat around the radio and listened to it for hours. TV didn’t start until after WW2 for most.

If you’d like to see some of the old sets, visit

<http://www.radioatticarchives.com/archive.htm?page=a1#Allied>

That’s just the first page of 50, so enjoy looking at all the old manufacturers.

Down at the Belton Hamfest, I saw an EICO DX-718 Space Ranger receiver. You don’t see too many of them around. It’s so forgotten you likely won’t even see a picture of one on the net without some serious searching.



EICO DX 718 Space Ranger

There were quite a few similar radios such as the National NC-60 which first came out in 1959 – It was an AC/DC single conversion superhet.



National NC-60 Receiver

The National Receiver used a regenerative IF to copy CW – it didn't have a separate BFO circuit. By putting the IF stage into regeneration, you generated the necessary signal to beat against the incoming radio signal so you could copy Morse code, or sideband.

Hallicrafters had the S-38 – which first came out in 1946 or so as the S-38 and S-38A. In the early 50s, it was upgraded to the S-38B, then S-38C. Tens of thousands of them were sold. It went from using the 8 pin tubes in the 40s to the miniature 7 and 9 pin tubes in the 50s and 60s.

Heathkit had the AR-3 kit, which was fairly decent – bandspread for the ham bands, and a transformer operated circuit. The Hallicrafters and National low end units were AC/DC with a floating ground (chassis isolated from ground with rubber grommets). Over time, they could become shock hazards as that isolation disappeared due to deteriorating rubber.

(Now, most of your ham rigs run off 12V, or maybe 24 or 48V internally for the high end models.). Most manufacturers also had increasing quality receivers – there are literally dozens of Hallicrafters models, Hammarlund, National receivers. Knight Kit had an entire series of radios – the most basic the regenerative receivers. Lafayette had a half dozen models, and of course, Heathkit had dozens of models of receivers and transceivers. When your latest issue of ham radio magazines arrived, hams would look at the ads and wish they could afford the nice equipment. At the top end naturally was Collins – but that was outside the budget of most hams back then.

Before WW2, during the 30s, many hams built their own receivers – times were tough during the depression. After WW2, there was a lot of WW2 surplus that got converted to ham use. Back then, it was AM and CW – SSB hadn't started yet, and of course, there were fewer ham bands!

Then, a whole raft of 'consumer level' receivers appeared – the ones pictured here for the Short Wave Listening market, and low cost/low end ham receivers. It was a challenge to use these to make contacts – especially since novice operators were crystal controlled and QSOs seldom took place on exactly the same frequency since folks didn't have matching crystals! These receivers also would need 15-30 minutes to warm up and stop drifting. Oh, it's so nice to have rock solid synthesized solid state gear that

doesn't drift, stays within 25 Hz of where it started at, and has great selectivity – in a small package along with a equally nice transmitter!



Hallicrafters S-38C Receiver

They then had the “D” model, and the last of the line was the S-38E which was very popular in the 60s.



Hallicrafters S-38 E

Lafayette offered the low end HE-30. It was made by Kenwood and was a decent radio with calibrated ham bands. It had a few more tubes in it.



Lafayette HE -30

It had a built in Q multiplier, and was transformer operated. Even better, it had calibrated ham bands (once you used a reference to set it).

Olsen sold a low end radio as well in their catalog. This was really ‘low end’ as it did not even have bandspread! It was mainly for SWLers – Short Wave Listeners.

Back in the 50s and 60s, nearly every country had major high power short wave stations that operated many hours a day – with hours and hours in English. You could listen to 50 or 60 different countries, hear their news, some cultural programs and music, and collect “SWL Cards” by making reception reports. The US and Russians had a cold war going, and there was lots of propaganda broadcast from both sides. Now, that the television and internet have taken over as the chief news sources, most countries have discontinued or severely cut back on broadcasting services. There’s not as much to listen to, and broadcasting is more less interesting. The US has decommissioned most of the US sites it used to broadcast (OH, SC, CA, etc).



Globe 65-320 Also sold by WRL and RME

Broadcasters are talking about ‘digital broadcasting’, but other than in places like Africa and Asia with large populations distributed over rural areas, the rest of the world is tuned in to TV and internet. You have to look far to find hams these days who use these radios other than on nostalgia type days

interference from home appliances is tremendously higher, and all the news is available on line instantly. This was the era before even inter continental TV broadcasting – it was just starting and a big deal. This was the era where international phone calls cost \$10 for 3 minutes, and calling across the country was a special ‘long distance call!.

Well, if you have a Knight Kit Ocean hopper or Space Spanner or similar regen set sitting in your basement, let N4CD know. It would be fun to fire up one of the early regen sets – after replacing a dozen caps or so (electrolytics and paper caps). Otherwise, on the other early equipment, I just enjoy seeing it at hamfests, but don’t have the urge to bring it home. I take pics, talk to the folks who have it to see if they had used it 40 years ago, or just move on. 40-50 years ago, tube gear was state of the art. Now it makes for interesting memories. There are also loads of sites on the web where you can go back in history in the time machine. Of course, not all the old rigs look as pristine as the examples seen on the web where they have been lovingly restored to ‘mint’ condition! Hi hi

Here’s the final blast from the past for this month – these were kits – the very basics from Conar.



Conar 400/500 Transmitter and Receiver Kits

Conar was an offshoot of NRI – National Radio Institute. If you took their correspondence course in radio, you'd wind up building these two units. It was a 1 tube transmitter model 400 (6DQ6) that put out 10 watts, and a 4 tube Model 500 receiver (with a solid state rectifier) that was 'so so'. They now sell for big bucks on Ebay. Some of the QRP crowd likes them and with some modifications work better. Back then, they sold for about \$60 for the pair, as inexpensive as you could find. Now, it will take some tinkering to get them to work and you'll need 'old style' crystals in the transmitter.

For those born after 1965 or so, likely they have never used 'tube equipment' having been born in the era of solid state equipment (other than high power amps). For most of the senior county hunters, this is the stuff

that many grew up with – all tube radios and transmitters. Many really wanted the ‘top end’ receivers, but most of us compromised somewhere in the middle – radios were expensive back then compared to what you get today with nice solid state synthesized equipment.

Hope you enjoyed the blast from the past. Next time you hit a hamfest, enjoy looking at the old gear, yak a bit with the seller – ‘oh, I used to have one of those’ – or ‘I wish I could have afforded that when I first got my license!’ - and try hard to resist bringing a boat anchor home just for show! Hi hi Most of us don’t have enough room on the operating bench either – those, too, were much bigger and heavier to hold all the weight and larger size equipment!

State QSO Parties IV

Nebraska QSO Party

There were at twomobiles out, but propagation didn’t cooperate allthat well from TX. A minor CME sent the A index soaring, and with the SFI in the mid 70s, it was tough from TX to work them. W0BH/m and K0PC/m were in the log along with K0ITC on cw. I checked the route and K0PC would hit a couple natural bingo counties, and one I needed. Otherwise, I just checked to see if I could hear the mobiles and give them some points with contacts. No propagation on 20M from TX to NE- just had 40M. I think they stayed busy on 20M, though. Got one new one.

N5NA(TX) may have led the pack apparently with 45 QSOs and 28 multipliers.

From the 3830 reflector

K0PC/mobile – “I was feeling the need for a QSO Party fix and Nebraska was the closest option (even though I put over 1,000 miles on the odometer). This was a solo operation and I only operated while parked. Nebraska allows county line operation so I planned to hit 12 spots for 24 counties.

I drove down from Minneapolis on Saturday morning and arrived near my first planned stop about an hour early. It's a good thing I was early because the planned stop was on a muddy single lane road that my sedan didn't like. It looked fine on the map but I had to find another spot.

After that spotty start I was able to keep to my schedule on Saturday with one exception. In order to get to my last planned stop at the Stanton/Wayne county line I had to drive right by my hotel at 10 PM. I couldn't stop the car from pulling into the hotel and after 16 hours I gave in. My apologies to anyone counting on that stop.

Sunday morning I got up bright and early and had breakfast before heading to my first stop. I finished up at noon with a total of 630 QSOs in the log. Other than dodging a thunderstorm on Saturday afternoon, it was a smooth operation. All of the equipment worked well and the operator even felt pretty good.

My big hitters come in two varieties. Jon, W0ZQ, from MN worked me at every stop for a total of 24 QSOs and 22 counties. Alan, N5NA, from TX topped the QSO count with 32 and rang up 18 counties followed closely by Carl, W9OO, with 30 QSOs and 20 counties. Many thanks to these guys and everyone who worked me multiple times.

QSOs	Stations
32	N5NA
30	W9OO
24	W0ZQ
20	NT5O
18	K7HP, NA5DX
16	K0HNC, W6GMT
10	K7REL, N4CD, NU0Q

Thanks to these folks and all the others who took time from the FLQP to work Nebraska.

I had the APRS system running and checked the aprs.fi site when I got home to see how it worked.

I was very impressed with the coverage by digipeaters in the area. I

don't know if the APRS helped anyone find me but it sure didn't hurt.

The rules for scoring mobiles are a bit odd in this QSO Party. You essentially submit a separate entry for each county. Makes it tough to win when you only spend 40 minutes on each entry. My reported score of 45,148 is the sum of all the individual counties. Thanks to the Heartland DX Association for sponsoring the NEQP.”

Florida QSO Party

This is always a good one. Propagation was so-so on 20M here , and I caught a few on 15m and one on 10M on Saturday with some E-skip due to intense storms half way in between. There were a few Natural Bingo counties, but I finished off FL last year, so it was a half hearted effort from here. 20M was weak with the high A index. I still had fun, and got some 1x1s in the log, too. The FL stations were mighty busy with many chasing them. Sunday was really busy on 20M with wall to wall stations. It looks like all of the FL counties were on the air – some got a clean sweep. There was loads of activity - skip was ‘short’ on Saturday, so GA, TN, SC AL, MS was working into FL on 20M with loud signals. Further away, the signals were not strong. Sunday it went back to normal, more or less. Tens of thousands of QSOs were made. The county hunters had a ball picking off the ones they needed, or just trying to work them all in one weekend!

At least the following mobiles were out: mobile stations K4KG, K4O, K4OJ, K5YAA, N4AO, N4CJ, N4EEB, N4O, N4PJ, NF4A, W1NN, W4AN, W4MY, and KC4HW, AD4ES, NX4N, W4ZW.

From K3IMC:

N5XG: “The FLQP was something else. It started out Saturday with all the FL daytime signals on 20 very light here. I worked 6 or 8 new ones, all probably 339 at best. The 85 watts with my long wire at 20 feet did not do well. But 40 on Saturday night and 20 Sunday were bruisers. The pileup was

from as low as 14015 and up, solid. Collier came on at the very last 15 minutes or so. The pileup was something out of a rare dxpedition. I tried and tried then at 2200 the band went quiet. No Collier in the log. Maybe next year. Thanks to those who made it a big event.”

From the 3830 reflector:

N4O mobile (K1TO K0NZ ops)

“N4O was a tribute to Ink, N4OO who enjoyed the FQP so many times from his mobile set-up. Thanks to his many FOC friends for supporting us with so many QSOs along the way.

Once again, we chose the simple method of sending and logging by hand, and using a speaker so that the driver could also listen. Ron outfitted his passenger van with Hamsticks and an Icom IC-746 once again.

Activity was terrific, and probably unprecedented! We ended the first day with 1578 QSOs and the last hour was over 240! Sunday topped that with 1711 QSOs and a last hour over 260!

As others have pointed out, skip was abnormally short at times and we worked many GA and AL stations on 20. Conditions seemed average for everywhere else, with Europe peaking in our late afternoon as normal. We did not bring a 15M antenna with us and several stations alerted us to the openings on 15 each day.

We really lucked out weather-wise. When we reached WAKulla, Ink's home county, and our furthest northwest point, the trees were blowing around and the clouds were moving quickly. But we avoided any rain and QRN, unlike many others. And it seems that bad wx made many folks outside FL available to spend time working us. “

KT4Q roving mobile: “This was my first attempt at a Rover Mobile. I have a lot to learn and only if I could run a frequency in CW, life would be different. It is a lot more difficult to make Phone contacts in mobile,

even when you are a rare county. Still had a great time doing it.”

KC4HW mobile: “Used a IC706MKII and a hustler resonator antenna for 20 and 40 meters. 1999 Chevy Pickup with 256k miles. Ran good, but wanted to run a little hot when it was idling. The RX was very quite, last year or the year before I used some copper strapping to bond the exhaust system and motor to the chassis. Really reduced the noise in the RX.

Had a great time in the FQP this year! Saturday I started in Holmes, then to Walton, Washington, Calhoun and Bay. Was going to Jackson, but was running out of steam. Actual operating time was 2 hours and 54 minutes and had 235 Qs. Was on the road from about 17Z until about 01Z which include a stop to get dinner before heading home. I ran into K5YAA, Jerry, from Oklahoma, he was operating in Calhoun when I crossed the line. Stopped for an "eyeball" and short chat (about 3 or 4 minutes) while he was operating. He said that he had been hamming for 52 years, I hope that I can make it that long, need 20 more years... HI. I went on down the road until I could not hear him in my RX anymore and then found a place to operate for a bit.

Sunday, I had every intention to get up early and make it over to Escambia pretty close to starting time, but unfortunately, I did not even wake up until 12Z, therefore, missed the starting time but made my first Q at 1511Z. Worked 10 Qs on 40m in 20 minutes--not exactly burning it up. The band was great and the signals were strong, but nobody was there. One of those 10 Qs was with K9ES in Brevard. I was very thankful to work Eric for my only BRE contact! Thanks Buddy! Unfortunately Eric had a stroke earlier this year and has been recovering, his CW was very good considering. Keep up the good work Eric!

Finally I decided to go to 20m, it is a good thing there were no buildings around where I was operating, because I am sure that one would have fell on me sooner to tell me to go to 20m. When I finally landed on 20m everybody was there. Duh! There was great activity and very strong signals.

Next on to Santa Rosa County, where 20m continued to be excellent, probably was my best period, I worked 91 Qs in 62 minutes. I was surprised, I actually did a double take to be sure that this was correct. May

not be a lot for many of you, but tops on my CW Challenged operating experience as "the best".

From there went to Okaloosa and with good results also. I must admit that my operating location was not the best. It was just off US90 right across the street from the railroad. Would you know that a freight train came by and made tremendous noise, so I rolled up the windows. The train went away and I had just not thought to roll the windows down again. The next think I know all of a sudden, I hear this horn blowing right at my door...scared the "pee wads" out of me... it was NF4A and he had come up on me from the blind side and started pounding out a CQ on his horn. We had a big laugh about it. Charlie was on his way to Santa Rose and Escambia. I continued on there for a few more minutes and headed to Jackson for my last stop. Conditions were still good on 20m and after a few minutes of CQing the crowd found me and I had my hands full again making 61 Qs in 45 minutes.

I will tell you that the pileup everywhere I went was very big! I have never operate from a DX CW contest before, but I could not imagine it would have been any larger than what I experienced in this years FQP. Each time I was in a county it was about 10 to 15 minutes of where I could only get a couple of letters and then move on with the rest of the call. My buddy W4EIP said that he caught me working the pileup in one county, I think SAN and that he knew that I was about to "crap my pants". I didn't, but it was quite challenging and fun at the same time.

There were tons of DX and all had huge to "esp" signals, during the tough times they stuck with me and I finally got it. It was that way with many Qs.

There were a few carriers and some other QRM, but I just ignored it and they went away. I missed my ole buddy than always sends "LID", wonder what happen to him? Two years in a row that I have missed him!

Nevertheless, thanks for all the Qs, I hope that I was able to give another QSO or a multiplier in the 9 counties that I visited. Next weekend the warden will be back home and I will be back at those chores.

The Alabama QSO Party in coming up the first Saturday in June. We hope to have full county coverage again this year. Hope that you can join us!"

W1NN mobile: “This was my third time doing a single op no driver mobile run in the FQP and clearly the best yet. I flew in from Cleveland on Thursday evening bringing all equipment and antennas, and returned home on Monday morning. No major problems (except for a sunburned left arm) and everything went pretty much according to plan (only got lost twice). The score is quite a bit higher than my 2005 and 2006 efforts because of more QSOs and more mults (46 states, 6 provinces and 19 DX countries”

NO5W (TX): Another in a long line of great FQP events with a number of outstanding ops and great participation both inside and outside of Florida. This year I wasn't able to recruit a driver or co-operator to do my usual mobile operation in the FQP so I thought I would go all out and try for the sweep which I had never been able to accomplish in the years before I started operating mobile in FQP.

So Friday night I was sitting at the computer going over the big spreadsheet of mobile activity (thanks - K0RC) trying to determine the "critical paths", and counties needing the most attention. With the rig tuned to around 7028 I thought maybe there would be some FQP ops doing some testing and looking for a signal report -- maybe one would issue a test signal. Sure enough about that time came a VVV to which I responded 5NN -- hmm perhaps the recently installed K3 telepathic accessory is working. Well a brief chat with K5KG, who was testing out the K4KG mobile with Jim VE7ZO, indicated that 40m was in fine shape. A QSY to 20m indicated the same for that band. So I thought a sweep was well within reach with good signals from FQP-land all weekend.

Well that wasn't the case as signals into the Houston area were very weak on 20m which seemed to be long and the band of preference almost all day Saturday. It wasn't until the action moved to 40m Saturday evening that signals picked up and the end of the Saturday session found me needing only thirteen more for the sweep. Interestingly the two (Monroe and Miami-Dade) that K0RC had marked in red due to planned activity only on Saturday were in the log in the first hour Saturday.

Reviewing the list on Sunday morning it looked like the tough ones were going to be Escambia and Walton. A quick QSO with NF4A just before the Sunday start revealed that he would be in Escambia but it would be his last one of the day rather than the first one -- it looked like the sweep wouldn't be

in the log any time soon. But good things sometimes happen when you least expect them and KC4HW appeared in ESC with a good signal and no pileup around 1545 and K4O appeared in WAL with the same conditions about an hour later. So by 1700 it looked like the sweep was within reach with only OKE and CLR remaining. The last one, OKE, went in the log at 1802 and actually was the easiest county all weekend in terms of time in the pile since I had had time to track N4O down the east coast and was waiting for him before the OKE pile had a chance to assemble.

The most difficult county in terms of time in the pile must have been LAF, where K5YAA was working the LAF-DIX county line. I must have stayed in the pile for a good half hour on that one. Of course shortly after finally working Jerry I found another LAF station.

The most amusing thing that happened to me at the QSO party illustrates that its important to listen, to be a frequent entry in the mobile logs, and to be in the right place at the right time. I was listening to the big pileup on a mobile as he entered LEE and was trying to determine what my calling strategy would be -- call high/call low, call early/call late, etc. I hadn't made a single call to the station in LEE but was about to hit the pounce button when, at the end of a roaring call by the pile, the mobile station sent NO5W 5NN LEE. I was stunned but quickly released the K3 telepathic QSO button and sent my exchange. It made my day just as the FQP did my weekend.”

Awards

USACA #1197	Duane, K8AO	March 27, 2010
Five Star #44	Chuck, AD8W	March 29, 2010
USA-PA – K #18	Chuck, AD8W	April 13, 2010
Bingo #316	Joyce, WB9NUL	March 31, 2010
USA-PA-W #7	Roy, N9QS	April 6, 2010
USA-PA-N #10	Roy, N9QS	April 9, 2010
USA-CA #1187	Susan, WA6OCV98	April 16, 2010
Second Time #396	Ed, K8ZZ	April 24, 2010
USA-PA-K #19	Tony, WA9DLB	April 24, 2010

Events for County Hunters

2010 MARAC Contests 0000Z May 1 through 2359 May 2, 2010 CW and SSB

The 2010 MARAC contests are coming up fast. The first year of my tenure has reveals the actual amount of work and dedication given by contest coordinators past. I would like to take the time to thank them for all of the work they have done to keep these contests alive. 2010 is showing some improved propagation forecasts. 20M has shown some signs of life, while 40 and 80 continue to be fairly steady. Being a 48 hour contest, with mobiles generally staying active until 0400 or 0500Z, all signs point towards a very successful contest this year. I am anticipating some activity from mobiles even on 15M.

Again in 2010, we are sharing the contest timeframe with the 7th area QSO party, the New England QSO party, and the Indiana QSO party. Each of these contests brings out some activity, and many stations exchange the information required for all four contests. Even the mobiles in those contests are aware of the exchange required for the MARAC contests, and are willing to oblige for the QSO.

The complete rules for the MARAC contests can be found at these URL's:

CW contest: <http://www.marac.org/cwrules.htm>

SSB contest: <http://www.marac.org/ssbrules.htm>

In a nutshell, United States stations work anyone, anyone outside the United States works only U.S. stations. The only valid modes this year are CW and SSB, with each contest scored separately. The exchange is a simple RS(T) and county for U.S. stations, All others is RS(T) and "DX".

Scoring is almost equally as simple. For either DX or U.S. Stations, both fixed and mobile, any QSO with a fixed station in the U.S. is worth one point. A QSO with any U.S. mobile is worth 15 points, whether you are mobile, or fixed. For U.S. stations only, a QSO with a station outside the U.S. is worth 5 points. Stations outside the U.S. can work only U.S. stations for point credit. Multipliers for everyone are the 3077 U.S. Counties. Plaques are awarded to the first and second place over fixed, mobile, and mixed entrant. Certificates are awarded to the highest fixed, mobile, and mixed station in each state.

Some tips for prospective mobile operators, even if you are inexperienced at operating mobile in a contest, or one of the greats. Mobile to mobile qso's are worth 15 points to each station, and chances are it will be a new multiplier for you, and them. Mobiles will be looking for other mobiles, so listen for them, turn the vfo to find them, and work them. Another is to maintain the same frequency in each county. I know under contest conditions, this can be very difficult, as many stations try to crowd in a few kHz, however, experienced fixed station operators will always be on the lookout for you, especially if you are at or near the same freq in each county. As a mobile, county lines are very tempting. When we putting out counties on the nets, they are a huge time saver. However, in the contest, operating from a line actually hurts the mobile score. A county line is a valid contact, however the mobile gets credit for only one QSO, and one multiplier, while the other gets credit for possibly two multipliers, and one QSO. Also, post your trip online. The more people who know you are out there, the better chance you will make many more QSOs.

I hope 2010 brings us very successful contests. I am looking forward to working many I have not heard on the air in a long time. On the publicity note, we will be published in QST, and it's associated publications. Also, WA7BNM's contest calendar has our information. Emails have been, and will continue to be sent to email reflectors dealing with contests and/or state QSO parties. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. All of my contact information is current either in the MARAC database, and QRZ.com Thank you, and 73—Scott, KA3QLF

If you are going to be in the event, please download the list of county abbreviations which will be used – Usually 2 letter state, followed by 4 letter county designator.

May 1, 1300Z - May 2, 0700Z **7th Area QSO** State and county code
www.7qp.org

May 1, 1600Z - May 2, 0400Z **Indiana QSO Party** RS(T) + S/P or IN
county, DX RS(T) only
www.hdxcc.org/inqp

May 1, 2000Z - May 2 2400Z **New England QSO Party** RS(T) and S/P or
New England county
www.neqp.org

May 8, 1700Z - May 9, 1700Z **Nevada QSO Party** RS(T) and S/P/C or NV
county
<http://nv.arrl.org/NQP/>

Don't forget – Friday afternoon **Dayton Hamvention** County Hunter
Meeting 4-5PM. Dinner afterward – usually 6-6:30 get together and yak for
two hours. Hope to CU there.
<http://www.hamvention.org/>

That's it for this month. Below is the cumulative index for the last five
years of the County Hunter News – articles, pictures, etc. We've published
a lot of pics of the county hunters for readers to enjoy!

73 de N4CD

Master Index as of April 2010

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