

County Hunter News

February 1, 2014
Volume 10, Issue 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

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

MARAC sponsors an award program for many other county hunting awards. You can find information on these awards and the rules at:

http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at:

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

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

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

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

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

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

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

Notes from the Editor

1) N4CD Rumblings

Winter arrived with a vengeance. Record setting cold temps and a 'polar vortex' brought temperatures not seen for 20 years to regions east of the Rockies. Temps down to 40 below in MN and wind chills to 60 below, football games in Green Bay played at near zero temps, and lots of snow and bad weather in the Midwest and New England states. Naturally, not too many county hunters ventured outside – state officials were saying 'stay off the roads and stay home'. If you are caught outside or in a disabled vehicle, it could be deadly serious.

Of course, a 'polar vertex' is nothing new. A major cold front back in 1776 saved George Washington. He was able to escape from Manhattan while the British were keeping themselves warm in residents' homes they took over. Were it not for that super cold snap, you'd be paying

taxes to the Crown of England. Most of the temps this time barely broke the record – maybe one degree colder – which means it has been essential just as cold many times in the past – without any CO2 effect. Just weather patterns you get every now and then, and fortunately not too often. I've seen 33 below in VT and 52 below in NY state – cold happens! And 25 below in IL when I lived there in the 1960s. Nothing 'extreme' or out of the ordinary. Now, half the people in the US weren't born back then – they're youg'ins.

A few mobiles were out – N7IV was up in ND where it was 20-30 below zero with highs not getting above zero. It was 15 below at noon time as he was headed west from Grand Forks, ND toward home. N9AC headed out of WI headed to FL. They had a foot of snow in Chicago and the Chi-berian Express kept temps there well below zero as he passed on by – probably where it was 10 or 15 below zero in the daytime. Brrrr! There weren't too many other mobiles out as snow, ice and blizzard weather hit the midwest and east coast. Even down to Atlanta is was 'real cold'.

Worse than the bad weather was the propagation for the first and second week of the year. What did we see? Day after day of this type of report:



A index of 8 – and 'poor' conditions on 40-20M. We had day after day of this. The mobiles were in there, you could work many of them, but it wasn't the 'best of times' propagation wise. Mid month things improved. The first part of the month, the sunspot count and flux were way, way up there – then they dropped off just as fast as they rose and it's been a see-saw the rest of the month. Later in the month, propagation improved many days with low A and K numbers.

There's an interesting article about the 'banners' like the one above in this month's issue of QST.

2) Call Change - Sam, formerly WE5EE, prior to that NX5Z, is now W5GND. The WE5EE call was tough in a DX pile up. I've heard him on 40M a few times with the new call.

Let's hope that W5GND works out well for him. Should be easy to remember – W5 Ground

3) Questions from a Newbie on the K3IMC forum:

Q: "I'm new to this forum and to County Hunting after being inactive for 25 years. Things sure have changed!! I downloaded the Excel spreadsheet to keep track of my counties. There is a column labeled "HIS". What goes in that column? Also, I note that the rules do NOT indicate the mode of transport of QSL's for this award. Are QSL's for legitimate QSO's allowed to be sent by Email attachment to be printed on my end acceptable for the WAC award or must all QSL's be sent by mail? What prompts this question is that I have a medical condition that makes my hands shake so severely that my handwriting is almost unreadable. I have designed my own QSL card using CorelDraw which allows me to store a template that can be filled in later with the appropriate information for each QSO. This card can then be sent as a JPG attachment to an email. 73 and thanks for any help.

A) Yes, things have changed. Lots of things have gone 'computerized' in a big way since 1984 with the very first PCs. There were at least two county hunter programs written to run on the first PC's. Cherries was one of them. It only tracked a few of the awards – well, there were only a few back then compared to today!

B) Some folks use a 'template' in Excel or other program to track USACA. Most switch quickly to MARAC Logger (you must be a current MARAC member, and there is a one time purchase for \$15. Folks can provide you with a template if you want to go that route.

C) QSL's. The official guru on QSLs is Ted, K1BV, the current custodian of the CQ Magazine award USA-CA. He and the CQ folks determine what is acceptable. QSL cards/MRCs in your possession are required

D) K1BV has said that he will accept eQSLs for USACA credit. Print off the confirmation and put it in your file. He is working with the ARRL on contacts verified with LoTW but there has been no announcement lately. As of now, LoTW contacts are not valid for CQ Awards.

E) You can buy pre printed MRCs (mobile reply cards with multiple lines), type them up yourself, let your computer do it, simply print off a list of the counties and data with a line at the bottom for the mobile to sign after verifying the contact data, or use Logger or other program to print off the MRCs. As of now, they still have to go by US slow mail both ways for most of the contacts. There is one QSL buro left for county hunters.

There's lots more info available at the links at the top of each county hunter newsletter.

W0GXQ/NF0N Trip Report

W0GXQ/NF0N December Trip

Last summer Mike, NF0N and I talked about running some counties in the SE area of Nebraska, so I laid out a two day plan which would take us through about 25 NE counties and included some hopping in and out of Kansas for five additional counties.

Mike informed me that he had a break coming up between the 23rd of December and the 6th of January from his part-time work as a school bus driver. We all know what he uses that money for! I started checking the extended weather forecast and we decided that December 28th and 29th would be our best shot.

Some background information on our dual operation installation: Mike's KX-3 resting on the dash supplements my IC-7000 with Logikey K-5 keyers for each rig. A coax switch between the seats behind us gives us the capability to select the dummy load, Hi-Q, or Hustler antennas. A length of coax positions his small dummy load adjacent to mine. All of our trip routes are generated using DeLorme Street Atlas and loaded to a small Acer net-book mounted in front of the passenger seat. Since I do all of the driving, Mike is responsible for watching the GPS, and making the determination on C/L stops, and generally keeping me out of trouble.

This is our twelfth trip together since back in January of 2006, and Mike logs all of the CW contacts by hand and records all of the SSB contacts. When the trip is complete, I have my CW logs in hand. Of course it takes time to transcribe all of the SSB runs, so Mike emails those later – it's a lot of work!

One of the best ways to accumulate band/county contacts for those close-in states is by setting up dual operator trips. We follow a spread sheet of our needs and program our Logikeys so we can zip along at 55wpm for our contacts. Some folks are purists and do not consider these in-vehicle contacts as quite proper; however, we feel if we actually hit those same bands in order to give county hunters a shot, it is justified. On this trip I picked up just one county from Mike for CW-VI, but quite a few band/county contacts.

On Saturday we experienced nice weather (near 50 degrees) and pretty good band conditions. Of course, like most of our trips, we ran late - this time because of so many jogs into and out of Kansas. I had 377 contacts on CW and a large number on SSB.

We stayed at the Capri Motel in Fairbury (Jefferson County) NE Saturday night. Twenty four dollars apiece - no frills, but very clean. We got into Fairbury right at 9pm and most restaurants had just closed, so we ended up at a local sports bar for pizza.

Sunday was a cold ten above zero and very windy, and again, the bands were pretty good. The number on Sunday was 497 CW contacts, and again, lots on SSB. For CW the number of contacts per band, from high to low were as follows: 20, 17, 40, 30, 15, 80, 12, and 10m. The counties drawing the majority of CW ops were Seward at 106, Butler at 96, Cass/Otoe at 81, and Filmore/Saline at 78. By the way, the only deer we saw this trip was a small herd which crossed well ahead of us.



W0GXQ/ NF0N Sarpy, NE

On the trip down to meet Mike on December 27th, I decided to drop off a base station transceiver for repair at Watertown SD. This would give me a chance to head west and run Marshall SD which had a lot of needs listed, including a LC for WQ7A. Marshall is one county you do not want to seek out during the winter when the humidity is high. Your antenna and guy lines build up with lots of ice and your resonant frequency takes off down the band. There was no icing this trip! On my way back north on Monday it was snowing and pretty cold, but again, good band conditions. Total CW contacts down and back from Nebraska was 891 and 184 on SSB. A lot of folks needed Cottonwood, so that was fun.

Prior to my trips, I take a look at the club Historian's County Sign "Pictures needed" list. Mike and I managed to get eight new ones for Gary (K4EXT). Next time, we will try and remember to include some mug shots at the sign posts (not as snazzy as those that N9QS submits)

The Blazer got typically gets 22mpg, and we found gas prices ranging from \$2.98 to \$3.26.

Went to 17m in every county both days (219 Qs). Saturday the first contacts on 15m was from the C/L of Sarpy and Douglas at 1640z, and the last contacts were from the C/L of Johnson and Nemaha at 2030z. On Sunday the 15m Qs started from Nuckolls at 1504 and were good until 2250z from Cuming. Total Qs on 15m was 110.

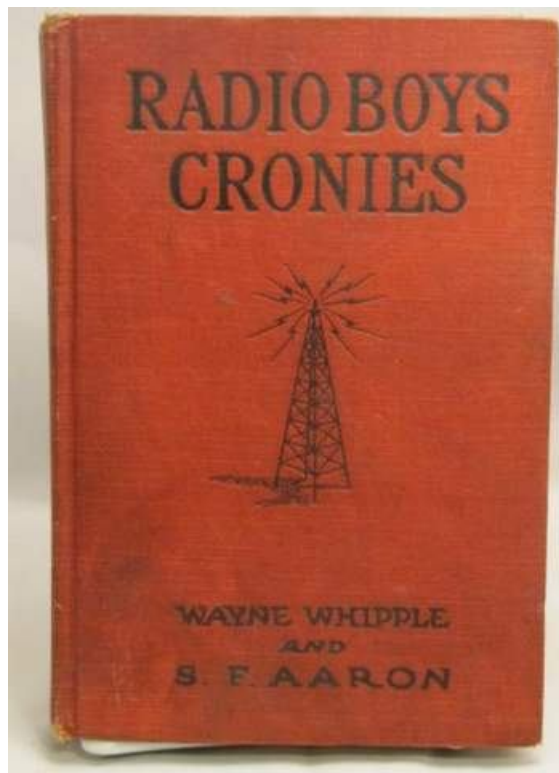
Only 26 Qs on 12m and maybe 6 on 10m. Just didn't hear much activity above 15m.

If you have never participated in a dual-op trip, you should try it. Here are a few of the county hunters I've teamed up with – dating back to June of 1998 with KA3DRO, W9MSE, K0EVE, KC0JG (N9QS), WU3H (CH CW contest), W0EAR, and NF0N. Lots of fun!!

Book Review of the Month

Radio Boys Cronies by Aaron and Whipple

There are just two books in this 'series' by Aaron and Whipple. We'll review both of them this month since the story continues from one to the other – at least the characters carry over.



This month it's another Blast from the Past, although this month, the book is on-line at Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11861>

The book starts out with several chapters talking about Thomas Edison – the inventor and his early life. Young Tom was quite an entrepreneur. For example, as a teenager, he sold the local newspaper for a nickel. He hung around the train station and made friends with the telegrapher, who was the first to get major news – even ahead of the newspapers – which would, of course, come out a few hours later or just once a day. Young Tom got the idea that if he could get the news and pass it on to the various train stations along the way, and get the telegraphers to put the headlines up on a chalk board at the stations, he could make a lot of money. He gave the telegraphers 'free' subscriptions to the Saturday Evening Post in exchange for what they did.

The idea was he would buy the papers in the city where he lived (a larger city), then hop on the train, and be at that station when the train pulled in before newstands would get theirs. When

there was big news, such as the Battle at Shiloh, where tens of thousands died, he could charge double or triple since everyone was eager for news. There wasn't radio back in the 1860s so the news came by newspaper. He went from selling 30-40 papers a day to selling hundreds and hundreds, even recruiting a bunch of other teens to help him at each stop handling the large bundles of papers. Edison was no slacker.

The story goes on a bit later to where they are constructing their own radios.

"The layout of the radio receiver outfits to be built alike were put at first on paper, full size; plan, side and end elevations and tracings were made of the same transferred to heavy manila paper. These were to be placed on the varnished panels, so that holes could be bored through paper and panel, thus insuring perfect spacing and arrangement. Sketches, also, were made of all details. The audion tubes, storage batteries and telephone receivers had been purchased in the city. Almost all the other parts were made by the boys out of carefully selected materials.

The amplifiers consisted of iron core transformers comprising several stages of radio frequency. The variometers were wound of 22-gauge wire. Loose couplers were used instead of the ordinary tuning coil. The switch arms, pivoting shafts and attachments for same, the contact points and binding posts were home-made. A potentiometer puzzled them most, both the making and the application, but they mastered this rather intricate mechanism, as they did the other parts. In this labor, with everything at hand and a definite object in view, no boys ever were happier, nor more profitably employed, considering the influence upon their characters and future accomplishments. How true it is that they who possess worthy hobbies, especially those governed by the desire for construction and the inventive tendency, are getting altogether the most out of life and are giving the best of themselves! The work progressed steadily—not too hastily, but most satisfactorily. Leaving at supper time, Bill's eyes would sparkle as he talked over their efforts for that day, and quiet Gus would listen with nods and make remarks of appreciation now and then. "The way we've made that panel, Gus, with those end cleats doweled on and the shellacking of both sides—it'll never warp. I'm proud of that and it was mostly your idea."

The receiving outfits were completed; the aërials had been put up, one installed at the garage, the other at the mansion. Grace naturally had all the say about placing the one in her home. The aërial, of four wires, each thirty feet long and parallel, were attached equi-distant, and at each end to springy pieces of ash ten feet long, these being insulators in part and sustained by spiral spring cables, each divided by a glass insulator block, the extended cables being fastened to a maple tree and the house chimney. The ground wire went down the side of the house beside a drain pipe. The house receiver, in a cabinet that had cost the boys much painstaking labor, was set by a window and, after Grace and Skeets had been instructed how to tune the instrument to varying wave lengths, they and good Mrs. Hooper enjoyed many delightful periods of listening in, all zealously consulting the published programs from the great broadcasting stations. The other outfit made by the boys, which, except the elaborate box and stand, was an exact duplicate of the Hooper receiver, was taken to the Brown cottage. Gus insisted that Bill had the best right to it, and as the Griers and Mrs. Brown had long been the

best of friends and lived almost next door to each other, all the members of the carpenter's family would be welcome to listen in whenever they wanted to. The little evening gatherings at certain times for this purpose were both mirthful and delightful. The boys' aerial was a three-wire affair, stretching forty feet, and erected in much the same way as that at the Hooper house, except that one mast had to be put up as high as the gable end of the cottage, which was the other support, thirty-five feet high.

Then it was back to more lectures on Edison – as the youth went off to the big city. You get a 'two-fer' in this book - adventure plus the life history of Edison. Not bad reading. A small bit of radio and a lot of adventure. Cheap entertainment.

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Part II

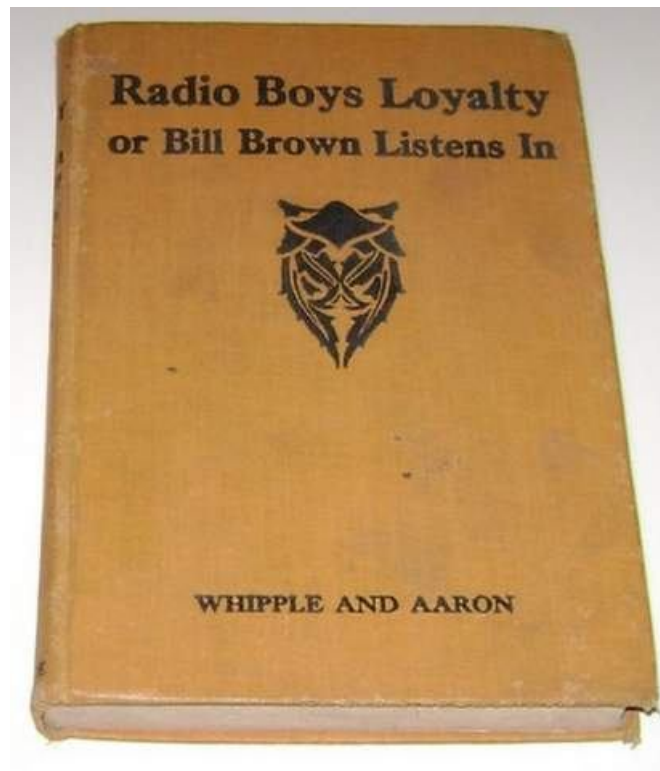
It's another goodie from Whipple and Aaron. Copyright date is 1922 and it's a tale of the two older teens, now in tech school, who were in the first of the books – Radio Cronies – reviewed above- and their adventures at a radio broadcasting station- the latest thing on the technology front, and their four year technical school. Broadcasting just started around 1920, and it took off like wildfire in 1922 with millions of sets reaching consumers. There was a need for programming, and taking the books from the past 5-10 years and turning them into radio programs was 'big business'. Weekly series. New books were also written with chapters designed to be 'complete' episodes, suitable for radio broadcast.

This book is available 'free' on line at Project Gutenberg at the following link

Radio Boys Loyalty – Bill Brown Listens In

by Whipple and Aaron

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/25753>



It starts out:

“The chums journeyed in silence then, their minds busy conjecturing what their experiences and adventures were to be, after they became students of the Marshallton Technical School, which they were rapidly approaching and from which they held high hopes of gaining much knowledge. The institution, despite its modest name, was nothing less than a university of broad constructive teaching, with departments of engineering, electricity, chemistry, manual training and biology. It was within the first two of these departments that William Brown and Augustus Grier were to concentrate their mental efforts. They had, as already related, earned this long-hoped-for opportunity to gain technical knowledge and training by showing what they could do along these lines. They had installed a small water-power plant and an electric lighting system for the Hooper estate, and had also won greater credit for constructing high-class radio receivers through which they had heard a no less personage than Thomas A. Edison speak. The boys had been saving their earnings to meet tech school expenses for at least a year.

Later

“They had under way the construction of five radio receivers of the finer type, for each of which they would get sixty dollars, the materials costing about fifteen dollars. These receivers were equal to more than a thousand miles, with strong, durable batteries and very wide amplification. As with their first radio and the one for their good old friend, Mr. Hooper, they made nearly all the parts themselves, even to the switch arms, contacts, buzzer and binding

posts, cutting all threads with a fine set of standard taps and dies. They also had two crystal sets to make, for which they charged twenty dollars each, and made a profit of seventeen dollars over the cost of the materials. The most interesting was the making of four portable sets, with vacuum tube detectors and loop aërials not over six inches in diameter, each packed in small, neatly made wooden cases about the size of an ordinary paper shoe box, the lids when opened forming the upright panels and the loop aërials hinged to open out and upright. Being rather unique in design, and satisfying fads for unusual construction, the boys felt they should get at least fifty dollars for each of these sets, the materials costing about twelve dollars. Earning enough in this way to help them along very nicely with their schooling, and being more deeply interested in their work than in anything else, it was not surprising that Bill and Gus found little time for play. When they had finished one of the larger and two cheaper sets, that upon installation at fraternity and boarding houses were found to work most satisfactorily, the cash was quickly paid over. Bill divided it equally and handed half to Gus.”

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The book is filled with adventure stories, ending with a kidnapping – which they solve using portable wireless sets and 'save the day'. It's another fairly decent adventure story for kids, written in the style of 100 years ago (ie, not PC in the least). Cars, trains, horses, steam powered yachts, spark gap transmitters – etc. It's somewhat along the lines of Carl and Jerry stories in Popular Electronics in the 1960s. It's amazing how many troubles these youth get into and find their way out of and how everything seems to fall in place nicely at the end.

They made tuition money and spending money by custom building radio sets – this the early 1920s before the major manufacturers ramped up.

Many of these books were also 'serialized' and broadcast on the radio chapter by chapter – one chapter a week. Every chapter seems to complete an episode, but get you into another one.....cliff hangers ..right at the end.....and the story would go on for 20 or 25 weeks....tune in next week to find out what happened to Bill and Gus..... (hi hi).

The early Radio Boys books were serialized....but after 1924, there was a lot of other options on the radio as programs multiplied by the hundreds – and the youth lost interest in weekly radio serial programs. Their popularity quickly declined, as did the book sales as time went on. By 1930, serialized kids books were essentially done. It's hard to even find the later Radio Boys books (which also had other authors and were pretty bad stories – de N4CD) available...so few were sold. There were a half dozen series – some with only one or two titles, others with six or 8 titles. They slowly are showing up as freebies on line to be read and enjoyed.

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Post review note:

I just found some MP3 recordings of one for of the early 'radio boys' type books available on CD.....not sure when they were recorded! Didn't say. (No tape or wire recorders back in 1922 – just phonograph records which had to be recorded in a studio). On Ebay you can find a CD containing all the chapters of The Brighton Boys in the Radio Service radio book in audio form – 20 'episodes' of it. - sold by KE3GK – who also shows up at hamfests.

Mobile Activity this Month

Jack, WD4OIN, was spotted out and about in NC on SSB

K0MAF was spotted in FL

AF5CC headed from OK across KS

W7IN headed from CA back to ID. Then noted in UT.

Fred, K0FG, ran a few in MO. Out on several days during the month putting them out.

N3RC spotted in CA, UT, ID on cw.

Mike, NF0N, and Jerry, W0GXQ, took a two day trip in NE. Jerry took a day to get down there from MN and a day to get back home.

Ron, KB6UF, headed back from CA to LA.

Ryan, KB9OWD, was busy putting them out in WI.

Karl, K4YT, headed from VA to FL. After soaking up sun, he headed back to VA.

Bill, K2HVN, went back to DE from VA – with a special stop in Arlington for the folks.

Darl, NA8W, was active in OH.

Gene, WB4KZW headed from AL back to NC.

Mike, NF0N, took another trip to get some LC's in NE for the folks.

Mary, AB7NK and Neil, K7SEN, headed out on a 4 day trip to NM and CO. Ran on SSB with CW on request off freq.

Dave, KW1DX, headed to western PA for New Years – then had to quickly head back home to avoid a blizzard headed that way after the holiday. Ran on 20/17/40 SSB and CW on request. Later put out some in MA and NH.

K0PVW, Rob, took a trip down to run some OKLA counties in the chilly weather.

Ron, K2RP, was over in AZ putting them out.

The team of Cliff, K6JN, and Nelda, W6XJN, yet again trekked from west to east across the country.

N9AC left WI headed for FL. Conditions were too dangerous to operate till he got far south with all the bad weather (snow, ice, sleet and 30 below wind chill) making driving difficult. Ran around in FL many days during the month.

N7IV headed from WI back home – putting them out on 40M CW.

Jerry, W0GXQ, was out in MN in a few counties in the cold.

Dave, KE3VV, headed up through PA and NY and back through and NJ and MD.

W5CJH was noted on the road

Alex, K5XY, put out counties in NM on SSB

KB0BA, Lowell, and Sandra, N0XYL, were out and about in IA. Later in the month over in IL.

Karl, K4YT, made a special trip to NJ including Hudson – a tough one to run.

Mike, KA4RRU, was out and about in VA.

Scottie, N4AAT, took a nice day trip around the northwest part of SC running them on SSB and CW – filling in a lot of the needs. Later he tried a trip to the Northeast corner but the truck decided to have problems and he had to head back on home.

K6PJ was seen mobile out west in ID and UT.

Doug, WA4UNS, made a trip up to NJ to run the counties.

Kerry, W4SIG, was busy putting them out in TN. More to come.

WC5B, big rig, was seen running counties in different states.

Rick, W5QP was up in the southeast part of KS.

KB9AIT ran a few in WI.

KA4RRU ran a few in VA/MD.

Hope for New H.F. Band Continues

ARRL Sponsored Test Continues

01/03/2014

The ARRL-sponsored medium-frequency experiment, operating as WD2XSH, continues apace in an effort to demonstrate the viability of 472 to 479 kHz as a secondary Amateur Radio allocation. At the same time, the FCC has been silent regarding the ARRL's November 2012 Petition for Rulemaking that asked the Commission to make this segment of the spectrum available to radio amateurs in the US. Delegates to the 2012 World Radiocommunication Conference approved a 7 kHz-wide secondary allocation between 472 and 479 kHz for the Amateur Radio Service, with a power limit of 5 W EIRP (or 1 W EIRP, depending on location). The FCC has indicated that it will address the issue within the context of its Notice of Proposed Rule Making in ET Docket No. 12-338, to formally reflect the Final Acts of WRC 2007 in its rules. In his quarterly WD2XSH update, Experiment Coordinator Fritz Raab, W1FR, reported that 514 contacts — 10 in the last quarter — have been logged among those taking part in the experiment across the US.

“As usual, activity increased as conditions improved during the fall. Much of the recent activity has involved WSPR-15,” Raab reported. “Reception over significant distances (eg, Europe, Alaska) has been reported. Much of the activity is being undertaken by a few new experimental

licensees.” Raab noted that WD2XSH participant Brian Justin, WA1ZMS, transmitted Fessenden commemorative broadcasts on AM via his own experimental license, WG2XFQ, during the December holidays.

In the US, the 472-479 kHz band is part of the larger 435-495 kHz segment that is allocated on a primary basis to the Maritime Mobile Service (federal and non-federal users), and on a secondary basis for federal government aeronautical radionavigation. The ARRL stated in its Petition that it is unaware of any domestic assignments that might conflict with the allocation of 472 to 479 kHz to the Amateur Radio Service, and there is almost no power line carrier (PLC) operation in this band segment. The FCC in 2003 cited the potential for interference to utility-operated PLC systems when it turned down an ARRL petition seeking an LF “sliver band” at 135.7 to 137.8 kHz.

The WD2XSH experiment involves more than three dozen stations and includes all geographic areas of the US, including Alaska and Hawaii. Most of the stations are in the eastern half of the US. Raab has reported no interference issues during the WD2XSH experiment, begun in 2006 and initially using spectrum in the vicinity of 500 kHz. The experiment is scheduled to continue until the current license expires on August 1, 2015. Seventeen US experimental stations not affiliated with the ARRL experiment and a handful of Part 15 stations are active in the vicinity of 500 kHz. A dozen so-called “heritage stations” in the US operate there as well.

As Raab noted in his report, at least a dozen countries already have approved Amateur Radio operation in the 630 meter band — 472 to 479 kHz. They are Germany, Greece, Malta, Monaco, Norway, the Philippines, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland, Finland, Spain, and France.

Source: ARRL Newsletter, Courtesy of ARRL, Inc, Newington, CT 06111

On the Road with N4CD I

Thursday – Day 1 on the Road

I was restless. There weren't too many mobiles to chase or counties to snag, and there were no contests or QSO parties coming up. There wasn't anything keeping me in town – no club meetings or other activities so I could take a week trip to south TX and find some sun and warm weather. It can be in the 70s way south in TX this time of year – down in the Valley down by the Rio Grande River. If you've ever been to one of the minis in Harlengen (Hidalgo County) hosted by Barry, W9UCW and Joyce, WB9NUL, you'll recall the palm trees

surrounding the Best Western motel there...and once or twice, even swimming in 'winter' there. OK...it was just the normal 50s for a high and 30s for a low weather in Dallas - except it's been chilly and 10 deg below normal most days so far this 'winter' We had that nasty ice storm and the ice hung around for a week in the shady areas. Finding sun and warmth while county hunting is a good excuse for a trip. I hadn't been far south – well, since the last mini years ago. There were lots of needs posted for those counties, too!

I checked the needs – they were pretty well scattered all over TX - almost someone needed everything – and of course, LY5A, NU0Q, K5WAF, and K2MF and others had just started over and needed 'everything'. Hollis had Mobile Diamond needs along with N9STL. There's 254 counties in TX so you can't run all of them every year. There haven't been too many cw mobiles out and about in TX either – other than the state QSO party – and some county hunters don't feel comfortable fighting those pileups which can get pretty fierce at times! In the QSO Parties, most of the activity is on CW – which doesn't help those who operate only SSB. Plus of course, most of the state QSO party folks are not good for the more advanced MARAC awards. South was a good way to go! Next trip might be west.

Once you leave the Dallas – Ft. Worth 'Metroplex' it gets into areas with just short trees or no trees – wide open pasture/ranch land - and it's that way through much of the hill country down NW of the San Antonio area. There's lots of the state with 'cap rock' just below the ground and only a few inches to maybe a foot of dirt on top for things to grow – so much of it is grazing land only for cattle and goats. You get down into areas that get less rainfall normally, too. You can see for miles and miles from every hilltop. There's lots of 'short' trees and scrub brush. Once you get down into the 'Valley' it's a lot greener with orange orchards and a more 'tropical like' temperature.

I left early in the morning – as it was a work day (Dec 26) although many had off. Our Dallas weather was chilly and had been for a while – just 25 degrees early in the morning. I had to get out west through the Dallas – Ft Worth Metroplex – that's about 50 miles across all of it - bumper to bumper suburbs and often bumper to bumper traffic at rush hour – or construction – or an accident. Therefore, I was on the road at 6am headed west through Denton/Dallas/Tarrant Counties to downtown Ft Worth – then out west on I-20 by shortly after 7am. Whew. Made it OK...traffic was light. It about 60 miles before you clear all the city and then it's wide open spaces and 70-75 and even 80 mph speed limits on some parts of the interstates. That's when I started to run counties in Parker, TX just after sunrise about 7:30 am.

The car is a Chevy Malibu – 2009 with 132,000 miles on it now. The rig is a IC 706 original...probably has 500,000 miles on the rig.... on the second mike the PTT switch on the first one wore out – seems to be a weak point - but no repairs otherwise. It suffers the problem with the cw key/paddle plug – I need to keep tension on it in the 'up' direction to get I to work. ..otherwise the radio just seems to keep on working. 500 Hz cw filter which is good for county hunting but not good enough for contesting. The antenna is a six foot mast on a

grounded mag mount on the trunk deck of the car with 40cw/30/20/17m resonators out horizontal. I took along a separate 40M SSB antenna – but it didn't get all that much use. 40M is really dead from south TX – you can barely reach OK in the middle of the day.

Here's the N4CD mobile set up that day



N4CD mobile at San Saba/Mc Culloch, TX

Gary, K4EXT was down to needing just 19 more county line signs for TX for the database. I could snag a few of them – that was part of the route plan. We'll get there eventually if a few more help out to get the last few. 254 Counties exist in TX – the most in any state by far.

There were a few other mobiles out. Dave, KW1DX, was on in the northeast starting in MA and headed to PA on a trip – nearly all SSB. He'd pass through 3 of the ones I needed in PA (Pike, Montour, Northumberland) and we'd try to hook up on CW after his SSB run. He would go to cw for pre-arranged skeds up the band from the cw freqs. Seth, N3MRA was on - SSB, and Jack, N7IV was on cw up in ND. Bill, K2HVN was headed back to DE with a planned side trip to Arlington, VA (my LC in VA – thanks Bill). Ray, AB4YZ, and his invisible 'mee-too' cheat'um side kick started in KS and headed east toward home with a side trip to GA along the way. Bill, NU0Q was on in KS on cw.

That was the activity for the day - lots of counties to snag and fill in those spots for the various awards. Conditions were pretty good. Dave, KW1DX and N4CD were running them on 17M as well.

I headed off the Interstate 20 down to Comanche – on the 'most wanted list' . Comanche County, named for the American Indian tribe – has fertile soil – but not a lot of water. There's only 14,000 people in the entire county. Then I took an accidental detour to Mills. Folks needed that one too – it was a 'bonus' county. I should have trusted and used the GPS lady instead but wasn't paying attention. Well, after a 30 mile detour I got back to San Saba and McCulloch – needed by quite a few and the last two for Kerry, W4SIG for Five Star in TX. Took Percy Pics, naturally. Lots of them on the trip. If I keep taking accidental detours, I'm going to be earning the “Magellan Award” for missed turns and faulty navigation which gets you to unplanned counties.

Way back when, Ed, N4UJK, now SK, had a bad habit of running counties in GA and winding up in a different one unexpectedly. That's real easy to do there – you can hit corners that aren't shown well on maps, and not all the roads are marked that clearly. He earned the nickname “Magellan” after the great sailor/navigator who made it round the world hundreds of years ago. He even called his 'coloring book' Magellan's USA Counties Map Book. So if you are out and about, and accidentally miss a turn and wind up somewhere you didn't expect or plan, you're earning points toward the Magellan Award. As far as I know, no one keeps score....hi hi. It's just a county hunter in-joke. Sadly, Ed was one of the big county hunters who left us in 2013 – now SK.

Things went well....I had time so I took the trip to get Schleicher – another on the 'needed list'. The population of this county is only about 3500 people and it is 1300 sq miles – a density of 2 people per square mile! Sparse. It is also the home of the notorious FLDS ranch – where Warren Jeffs and others ran into trouble with polygamy and 'spiritual wives'.

Schleicher turned out to be a LC for Don, W0EAR on 17M. There's not much reason to go there. You can head on down to historic Ft McKavett and put out a nice county line there. You only have to go 10 feet into the county – and skip the rest of lots of 'nothing'. Run the county line and leave it behind.

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Fort McKavett

“Atop a remote hill, the remains of a 150-year-old fort beckon visitors to one of the best preserved examples of a Texas Indian Wars (1850–1875) military post. At Fort McKavett State Historic Site, take in the spectacular Hill Country vistas and experience early West Texas life through the real stories of the infantrymen, Buffalo Soldiers, women, and children who lived at what Gen. William T. Sherman once described as "the prettiest post in Texas.



Ft McKavett Historic Site

Overlooking the headwaters of the San Saba River, Fort McKavett, a Texas Historical Commission property, consists of 19 restored buildings located on 80 acres near Menard. Several of the buildings have been refurbished with period furniture. Restored structures include the officers' quarters, barracks, hospital, school house, dead house, sink and post headquarters. In addition, there are ruins of several buildings, most notably the commanding officer's quarters, which burned in 1941, and the barracks along the north side of the parade ground, which once was the longest building west of the Mississippi River. “

<http://www.visitfortmckavett.com/index.aspx?page=9>

Good pics and reading at

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/mckavett/post.html>

<http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/tx/fortmckavett.html>

According to Wiki

“The settlement of Fort McKavett had its 1850s origins as a civilian population just north of Camp San Saba in Menard, County , with the name of Scabtown. Camp San Saba closed in 1859, and many residents fled to safer areas to be protected against Indian depredations. The United States Army reopened the outpost in 1869 as Fort McKavett. As the civilian population of Scabtown grew, the community was renamed after Fort McKavett, and the local economy began to thrive. The Army closed the fort in 1883, but the earlier relocation of native American tribes made the civilians feel safe enough to remain. The population grew, and with it an economy that supported two hotels, three churches, a newspaper and a mattress factory. The population peaked at 150 at the beginning of the 20th century, but declined in the latter half of the century”

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There's a Post Office there with it's own Zip Code – 76841 You'll drive miles and miles to get there and there's not much along the way, either.

It's officially listed as a Texas 'Ghost Town'. No one lives there any longer. A few folks live on farms/ranches nearby.

If you attended the mini in San Angelo, hosted by Randy, AJ5ZX and Janet, KC5QCB, you will recall there's another Indian Wars fort there. They extended from the Red River up north down to the Rio Grande River at the very bottom of TX.

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I took a quick look but didn't have time for a visit to the Fort – maybe another time. Counties were waiting. The county line is just west of the fort



Schleicher/Menard, TX

Note that Menard County has a population of about 2300 for the entire county of 900 square miles – or a density of not even 3 people per square mile overall – and most of them live in/near the two tiny towns or on farms.

From there it's a 50-60 mile trip to the interstate and getting to Junction, TX in Kimble TX

where there are a few motels. (pop of entire county 4600 – 1250 sq miles). There's a Motel 6 there – not cheap - \$60. When there are only a few motels in a town along the interstate – you wind up 'paying up'. Nicely redone in the new style but you don't even get breakfast for that price.



Motel 6 Junction, TX

Later I wound up heading into town and there are some lower priced motels there – 1940s-50s style. If I head back, I'll try them probably to save a few bucks. There's not much in the way of places for dinner. The motel folks recommended the Corson BBQ place next door. Rip off! High price and the food wasn't that great although it was busy as heck. Head on down the road to Kerrville if you're trekking on I-10. It's a better place but it wasn't on my route. The speed limit on the interstate is 80 mph! You zip along but there are lots of miles to cover. The Malibu will do 80 mph but the gas mileage suffers. I poked along at 70-75.

Most of the towns here exist because there is a river – and folks moved there for the water. In some cases, engineers could dam the rivers and make small lakes/reservoirs to support a small community. Otherwise, this is fairly dry west Texas with not very dependable annual rainfall.

The weather had been overcast all day with a high just above 50. Not much sun, either. Junction is up a couple thousand feet and it cools off at night. Motel was quiet and mostly empty with maybe a dozen cars for 50 plus rooms. It was a bit early – but the next motels along the route were a good 60 miles south in Uvalde - and a good hour and a half with the needed stops for county lines to be run. The first day I did 403 miles. I had done enough in one day. I was up that day at 5:30 in the morning getting set for an early start. By the time I

got back from walking to the BBQ place for dinner, it was getting dark. It's still near the shortest daylight hours of the year. I hit the hay at 9pm.

Friday

In the morning I wandered(drove) into the small town of Junction and found the Chuckwagon Cafe open for breakfast at 6:30am. Chilly outside – in the mid 20's. Chow was nice pancakes and eggs and reasonable price. Junction is a farming/ranch supply town of about 2500.

One of the local cops stopped by for breakfast. Must be the place to be. One other group of five was there. No fast food places there other than a MacD right near the motel at a gas station/convenience store.

After I filled up for breakfast, it was on the road headed south from Kimble. I was trying to hit as many as I could along the route with a jog here and there. Folks wanted Real and Edwards – not much reason to go there other than running the counties. Lots of open road at 70 mph. It's not on the way to anywhere. You can run that C/L right on the main route at two spots where it wanders back and forth across the county lines. Nice and quiet, too! From this far south in TX, 17m comes alive – you are 'far enough' away from nearly all the county hunters in the country!

Real County – pop 3300. Edwards County – pop 2000. My home county of Collin TX – 783,000 people!

The weather was 'drizzly overcast' on and off all day. Seems the only rainy weather in the whole country was in the south part of TX and in FL.



Real County, TX

Today's trip was miles and miles of good road through Uvalde to Zavala. 70-75 mph speed limits on the roads. You see a car or pickup truck every now and then. Sometimes you might go 20 miles and not see another vehicle or house or ranch, but mile after mile of barbed wire fence. There's one or two towns in these counties and that's about it where I was.

Jerry, W0GXQ, started his trip down to NE to meet up with NF0N for their two day trip. He had slush on the road and 30 deg temps. Mike, KA4RRU was on in VA. Dave, KJ8V, ran some counties in MI on SSB. AB4YZ and the mee-too cheat-'um side kick was on in MO headed east. AF5CC, John, was on cw running for a dozen counties. Darl, NA8W, was on SSB in OH. Ron, KB6UF was heard in CA and he would be heading back east to home. Karl, K4YT, was headed to FL. The CW frequencies were humming from 40 up to 17M. Isn't it nice to have 4 cw frequencies? Yeah! Jerry, W0GXQ, would get up to 15m at times, too.

Then it was east over to Live Oak and south again filling in the counties. You can tell when you've hit the 'shale areas' on TX. There were hundreds of trucks on the road hauling water for the hydraulic frack'ing. It takes millions of gallons per well – and that's lots of trucks. This is the Eagle Ford shale area. The roads were a mess with mud and dirt and my car got pretty well covered with grimy dust on the trip from this. There were occasional drizzles of rain that made a real mess of things. There's lots of oil in this field, so the activity is high. Natural gas prices are depressed but oil is still up at near \$100/bbl.

From Live Oak, the route went south again into Jim Wells where I stopped at a Days Inn in Alice, TX. Not many other chain motels listed other than a Best Western and they are usually \$\$\$\$\$. The nice lady at the motel desk said 'all the prices are high because of the oil

shale folks'....duh!....looks like you gotta 'pay up' again. \$70 for the room – but at least you get a nice hot breakfast included. Hmmmm...where are my cheap rooms in TX these days? (big cities or real small towns). Maybe I just didn't try hard enough to find a smaller older motel at 2/3rds the price? I saw a few older motels but the parking lots were filled with 20-30-40 year old pickup trucks – not exactly a recommendation to stay there. When it gets dark early you have less time to hunt one down. This wasn't in the area I often go roaming – too far from home for a day trip or one day overnight trip.

It was totally overcast. I didn't see the sun all day. Yuk. Where was my sun? At least the temps were moderate. I could use some 70s temperatures. It was in the low 60s. That wasn't going to last as yet another arctic cold front was headed south.

The next town with motels was 50-60 miles south so it was time to stop and it was about to get dark in a hour. This had been along day starting real early – so I bit the bullet and 'paid up'. There really weren't that many folks staying there - at least on Friday night – so I think they just jack up the prices and use the Eagleford oil shales as an excuse – or wishful thinking. Some of the reviews of the motel did complain about 'rowdy and dirty' oil field workers, though. Didn't see any of them or have any problems.

Since I stopped a bit early, I could had on over to Nueces County and snag a picture of the sign for the county sign database – one of the missing 19 in TX.



Nueces/Jim Wells, TX
Right along the railroad tracks

I took lots of Percy Pictures. That turned out to be a longer than expected trip to get the picture – lots of congestion getting out of town - ran the county line – 30 minutes sitting there - then headed back into Alice. Dinner was at a nice Chinese Buffet - \$10. Excellent!

Finished reading one book and started on another. Hit the hay at 9:30pm.

Saturday

Breakfast at the Days Inn...they have waffles – and eggs – and sausage – and cereal..... I indulged. Yes, a waffle, a bowl of cereal (Raisin Bran – good fiber) and a small portion of egg and sausage. Got to get my money's worth – hi hi Wish they had some fruit so I could get in the recommended 10 servings of fruit and veggies a day. You've got to bring your fruit own along as you travel – apples and bananas and raisins. Then it was on the road again. The temperature had dropped to near 30 degrees. Yuk!

It seems the only place it was raining in TX was....well, where I was. The weather was raining in 10 counties in TX and I would be in most of them – in the south tip of TX. Duh! Where was my sun and warmth? Seems a nasty low pressure system formed in the 'Permian Basin' in far west TX – that's west TX out by Midland and it was spinning up lots of clouds and moisture in south TX. It would send a snow storm across the country to New England in the next few days right around New Years Eve/Day.. I got to see drizzle all day on and off as I wandered through the middle of nowhere in south TX. All you see is scrub brush and cactus and prickly bushes, and miles and miles and miles of barb wire around gigantic size ranches. Here and there a few cows are visible. There's not much rain here year round but when it rains, it floods. There are flood gauges along the roads in the Hill Country a bit north and at 'river crossings' south of there – usually the rivers are near dry but can rise 6 or 10 feet in a good gully washer. Every now and then, a Gulf hurricane will hit this part of the country and dump 10 or 20 inches of rain in a day or two. Most of the bottom 100 miles of TX is flat – sandy and scrubby. Good cattle grazing land, some places OK for orchards or some select crops that can tolerate the climate.



Flood Gauges – Hill country

You'll see these gauges in dips in the road as you drive along – no sign of a creek visible at most of them. When you get thunderstorms, the roads can be closed at multiple points – you could be stranded for a half day or two until the water goes down. If there is a creek – it can rise 4 or 8 feet quickly – in some places up to 15 or 20 feet in the Hill Country in the canyons.

Not to many in the south 100 mile from the border area of TX, though, but you can find low spots that flood in a downpour – which doesn't happen often here.

Today was a day on lots of 3 and 4 digit TX roads – smaller less traveled ones. Mostly 2 lanes but often with decent shoulders (paved). You could zip along nicely. Most of the people in the 'south counties' along the Rio Grande river live at the south end. The north end of Starr is once again pretty empty of people and towns. You've got one or two bumps in the road and that's it.

You can have a bit of fun taking pictures. At one county line, there's a old windmill on the property behind the county line sign. If you line up things carefully, you can get a picture like



Starr County TX

After taking a few hundred county sign pictures, well, I got to find some strange ways to do it! Can't easily take a picture of myself by the sign – yet. No 'selfie' in front of the sign. My cellphone is one of the 'dumb types'.

The bands were hopping. Mike and Jerry were in NE. WB4KZW was on in AL. Karl, K4YT was still headed south. Ryan, KB9OWD was on in WI/IL. AB4YZ and mee-too cheat-um W4CA was headed east. Ron, KB6UF was headed east running on SSB. It was busy on cw. Many times 20cw was busy so I'd start on 17cw. From south TX, you are far enough from just about everyone and it's great signals. Many times it's better on 17m than 20M and the pile ups are ferocious. Trying to just pick out a call from 10 or 15 very loud stations calling, all about the same strength is a challenge.

Jerry, W0GXQ and Mike, NF0N, were doing the NE thing. Now when you work 'both' of them, you get all the stars, you get a valid W and N prefix, you get a 1x3 and a 2x1 callsign which is assigned to the OPERATORS using them. 100% valid contacts. The team of W8FNW/W4FNW were zipping around in FL putting them out. There you get a 1x3 callsign, a “W” prefix and a valid YL-OM team contact plus 2 stars, and a 100% VALID no-star contact with W4FNW. There's two operators involved in these contacts, both using THEIR OWN FCC ISSUED Callsigns.

I headed southwest through Duval - desperately needed by N0XYL for a LC – and we hooked up after a miss the day before. It was also a LC for Silver, N9QS. Then down to Brooks.

With lots of driving you can get to all the counties in the tip of TX in a day – at 70 – 75 mph – all day. There are few gas stations or stores so tank up in the towns when you can. I passed a gas station – then decided to circle back five miles as the tank was half empty and there wasn't much on the route for the next 150 miles. You can go 100 miles without anything down this way – maybe a 'co-op' gas station that takes a special card to use. The roads were good, butit drizzled on and off. At least it was in the high 50s. I was thinking I'd spend a day or two or 3 soaking up sun in south TX...but the weather forecast was – 'the only rain in TX is in the south tip'....and it will stay there for a day or two more and be below normal temperatures getting down another 20 degrees. Yuk!.....there's no reason to stick around! After heading down Route 77 to Cameron – running it quick then heading back north – I made tracks back toward home.

The rain is good for the crops and grazing lands – gentle rain = but not much of it. No chance of floods.

You go north through Kenedy County TX – which is essentially the King Ranch. That's it – nothing else. The entire county is one ranch and one tiny town. The entire population is just over 400 people. According to Wiki “Kenedy County has the distinction of having the fourth-lowest population of any county in the United States, following Loving County, Texas, Kalawao County, Hawaii, and King County, Texas.” Fortunately there is a great 4 lane divided highway where you can zip along at 75 mph the whole way. You go 60 miles without a building, gas station, or store.

This time of year it can be real nice in Cameron and down in the Valley. That's 'can be' but this wasn't the week to be there. Those north cold fronts were sending cooler weather this week to all of TX. No reason to stick around.

If you want a less expensive motel, stay in Kingsville in Kleberg County – the Motel 6 there had a \$39.95 price up on the marquee. There are dozens of motels there. I headed on past – still daylight and time to make tracks for a few more counties. I made it up to Beeville in Bee County.

I've stayed at the Motel 6 in Beeville. It's a giant one – and there was a fair crowd staying there. Not cheap \$60. Not many places nearby to eat- you'll go a couple miles to find a restaurant. Headed toward The Lodge – recommended by the motel staff.

Drizzle...drizzle..drizzle. No sun/warmth here in TX. Was in the 50s at dinner time so that isn't so bad.....especially when folks tell you it is six below way up north! Hi hi.

Sunday – Day 4 on the road

The search for warmth and sun was futile The weather forecast for the area I was in was chilly

for a day or two and not much sun with lots of clouds. Just below 30 degrees here in the morning and no sun. I could do without that. There was no nice weather to find in south TX – at least not better than the home QTH. Today was the day to circle around San Antonio (Bexar County – pronounced 'bear'), hitting the ones to the south, west and north. (Wilson, Atascosa, Medina, etc). Might as well be home for the same temps.

It was in the 20's when I woke up and checked out of the Motel 6. No breakfast there and worse, there aren't any fast food places to get chow or any sit down places for a nice Sunday breakfast. The best option, short of driving ten miles or more out of the way was the local gas station 1/2 a mile away that had breakfast tacos. Actually they were pretty good – you could get egg and ham, egg and bacon, egg and cheese combos plus any spices you want, plus of course good coffee. \$3. There was even a sit down area...and the local police stopped by for coffee – so I guess this was the 'place' to be in Beeville. Had my fill and headed out to the first new county, aiming to be there about 7:30 when the bands seem to perk up nicely. Around 7:20 the sun peaked through the heavy clouds. That was about the only time I saw it all day – total cloud cover and worse to come.

In the early mornings I might start on 40M cw and work my way up. Later in the day, I prefer to start on 20M cw – then go 17 to 30 to 40M. However, with so many mobiles out and about, 20 was often busy so you'd start on a different band. There was next to no data coverage in most of the areas on the trip! Only half the area had cellphone service – maybe you have to have the right carrier, but Verizon was 'dead' for a lot of the back roads and even parts of the interstates (I-10). When folks called, I'd only get the messages when I hit a town that had service. That might be an hour or two late – and I'm long out of the county they wanted on some band/mode.

Jonas, LY5A was there most of the day and SM7ZDI, DL3IAC at times. DL5ME had a big signal most of the day, too. DL6KVA was there on 17M. Not much else in the way of DX this trip for me. Most of the runs had near zero power line QRN – that's nice. You'd hear the weak ones with few problems. However, there were BIG echoes on signals from EU. It sounded like 3 people sending at once slightly delayed with each other. There must have been multiple paths across the ocean. If you have 2 or 3 DX stations calling, it's a real mess of echoes!

After 25 miles, the car found it's way to Goliad – another requested county and on the 'needs list'. Stopped to run it – a 'dead end' county - then backtracked. Up to Wilson, then jogged west to Atascosa – seems that hasn't been run a lot on cw lately even though it's on the interstate...then circled around San Antonio on the 410 beltway.

It was Sunday and probably could have gone straight through the city and saved some miles. It took a while to get up route 16 to whack the corner of Medina, then hit Bandera – then head northeast. Texas has lots of good roads – there's just miles and miles and miles of them!

The bands were hopping. K4YT was down in FL headed to the keys (Monroe County). Jerry, W0GXQ and Mike, NF0N, were busy in NE, while NA8W was out in OH, and Gene WB4KZW was headed back to NC. Mike, KA4RRU was up in MD. The cw frequencies were going full tilt. A good number of the cw runs wound up 'down 2'. When you have experienced mobile ops, when another mobile announces he/she is going down two, the one on the regular frequency will let everyone else know by sending:

CHN QNC W0GXQ QSY DWN 2 CLAY NE.....HR N4CD ERATH TX QRZ

Hopefully someone listening will then spot the run down two so everyone else can catch up with them.

QNC means 'message for everyone' or net announcement.

N3RC and N0HKK were on SSB in a few, too, according to the spots log. Darl, NA8W headed to more counties in OH.

Mark, KO1U, accidentally used phonetics while calling a mobile and got a scolding on SSB from – well, you know who. It's like the reform school on .336 with the little martinet in charge, just waiting for a 'violation' of 'his rules' so he can dump on someone.. Bet if he could remotely whack you on the knuckles he'd do it..... well, a few passer by types managed to use phonetics and not get yelled at. Heck, even one or two mobiles are so 'brain dead' these days they get upset when a passer by uses phonetics. Hey, go in the back room with 'kay zed 2 pee' and practice your phonetics so you don't freak out when someone uses standard phonetics – that's my advice. If you're mobile and someone calls in.....don't be an idiot like 'kay zed 2 pee' and yell 'no phonetics' or even more stupidly "I won't work you if you call in with phonetics". Work the guy. He'll catch on pretty quick if he sticks around for more than one mobile. You don't have to sound like the idiot on 336 yelling at folks for using phonetics the first time or two. My 2c.

The best way I've found to handle that situation when some calls more than once is to ask the 'offender' for his name. Then the next time he calls in, I say something like 'Hi John – welcome to the CH Net – you'll notice we tend not to use phonetics since we all quickly learn the calls'...and he usually gets the hint right away. Hi hi. No need to make like the 3rd grade and yell at them for using phonetics. You might even convert him/her to a county hunter that way rather than instantly causing him to leave the frequency with a bitter taste in his mouth. .

Anyway – the weather was OK in the morning....totally cloudy and it got up to 60 degrees – but no sun. Roads clear and traffic not bad – even the back roads have lots of recreational use and there's no lonely roads in this neck of the woods – roads good all the way to home. This is the 'Hill Country' of Texas and folks flood out from the cities to 'recreate'.

The pileups were heavy – wow....17m still was working well – 20-30 people in most counties

and signals better than 20M for the further away stations. Joyce, N9STL was in there on 17m with a good cw signal. Hollis was 'loud' and the DX did better on 17m than on 20M. I'd lose propagation on 17 to a few people as I headed north and the skip no longer worked. Gene, K5GE, was working me consistently at a couple hundred miles on 17M – weak but there.

Then the weather took a turn for the worse as I hit Lampasas. Within 10 miles the temperature dropped from the 50s to the 30s – over 25 deg drop. Then it started to drizzle and would be drizzling for the next 160 miles as I headed north. I checked with the GPS lady and she said 207 miles to home and I could be there by 6pm if I didn't stop. She's an optimist and doesn't understand county hunters who stop on county lines, take 'dead ends' to run a county – and even need to stop and get gas, use the restroom, and eat. It was a 'data point'. The wind was howling out of the north at 30-40 mph. Let's see..N4CD headed north at 75..wind blowing 30-40 mph from the north...felt like driving at 110 mph with wind blowing the car around. Of course, I was running the county on cw too as I zipped along. If I missed a dit or two, you'll understand. The Malibu is steady but the wind was howling and buffeting the car.

This is now the route I take back from the twice a year Belton Hamfest many times – so I knew the route well. Traffic moves at 70 mph – parts of the route are 75 mph speed limits if you want to go that fast. You'll be passed by others if you poke along at 65. There's 150 miles of open road before you hit congestion in Hood and there's lots of traffic and traffic lights for 20 miles. Good 2 and 4 lane roads are part of the route.

JH7VHZ was booming in on 17M this time of day – up to 599 before he disappeared. He must be on vacation this week – he usually is only on on Friday and Saturday afternoons/evenings – from his big station 25 miles from his home QTH.

Then.....the drizzle started freezing on the windshield – OK...turn up the defroster. After the big ice storm 3 weeks ago, the last thing I need is more freezing rain and ice! The roads should be OK with the previous warmer weather – and so far no problems. However, there's lots of elevated roadway and 'fly overs' – giant intersections with ramps going up 200 feet in the air in places – on the way home. They can freeze over quickly. It's an unpleasant weather surprise. It can be a couple degrees cooler west of Ft-Worth.

What's this? A big stuffed chair in the middle of the lane? Just fell of the truck 300 feet ahead of me.....whoops....quick collision avoidance maneuver at 65 mph....two lane road with paved shoulder fortunately. Close one....good thing it just sat there and wasn't rolling or bouncing around. Whew. Could have been real bad hitting it – another reason not to be driving later in the dark. The truck was pulled over 1000 feet later with the driver wondering how he was going to get back there and get it back in the truck – hopefully before someone hit it.

It was getting dark and drizzling. Around 4:30 pm with an hour of daylight left but you couldn't even tell the sun was still up with the dense overcast and gloom. Normally I'd stop by now...but – it was time to get on home and not spend another night in a motel this close to

home. I knew the roads – all good roads – 4 and 6 and 8 lanes not far ahead - and it was Sunday so I could make it through the usual week day mess of traffic of the “Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex” with hopefully no hassles and normal traffic jams. You never know – one accident and you can sit for 3 hours. There were tens of thousands of cars on the road for the last 100 miles on the way home.

I stopped a few times to run on SSB for the folks – and Bosque/Hamilton is a short dead end stop to run that. It was really getting late. Well, folks needed the counties despite the drizzle and cold and wind. Spent a half hour there – working all the bands. Heck, Jerry, GXQ, had had roads covered with slush when he left home to get with NF0N for the NE trip – and it was near zero deg up there – no fun for sure. I guess I can't complain too much but it is all relative.

Then it's up through Erath to Somervell – one of the 'small' counties in TX along with Hood and Rockwall. Jerry, W0GXQ, needed Somervell on 17M. It was late in the day – 5pm – hmmm...would it work on 17M? He's in NE, not 500 miles further north in MN and he's mobile. I worked Jerry on 40M and told him to QSY to 17 after the run. Karl, K4YT was the first to come back on 17M CW. I asked him to do the QSP to get Jerry relayed in – and he did and we had success with 339s both ways. The idea was to get that contact in as soon as possible since the skip was getting longer and longer by the minute. Jerry is getting close to finishing TX on 17M. I'd bet he was busy working Mike on 17cw in those tough NE and KS counties, too! Hi hi. When I was working on All 30M, Charlie, W0RRY and I would go out and get the needed ones together. We used an MFJ QRP rig with a 50 ohm resistor and 2 foot 'antenna' at a few feet to make a contact on battery power. Why not? That's having even more fun while mobile. You just have to work someone 'in' the county and it matters not where you are at the time. Many CH pairs of operators work each other on 2M for the county credit (or even transmitted county credit) as they hit new/needed counties. You can never 'have too much fun going mobile'. Of course, the cw folks have to use cw and the commonly available QRP rigs with a small battery work fine. You only need milliwatts at six feet.

Then folks wanted Hood....well....more miles and more traffic on 144/377- which wasn't too bad on Sunday night – compared to the usual 20-30 minute delay getting through about 10 traffic lights in a big mess of shopping areas and restaurants in Granbury. Just took 10-12 minutes this evening.

The car was getting low on gas – so I stopped in Hood – brrrr. It was 28 degrees out with a good stiff breeze. The rain had frozen on the pump nozzle. Yuk. That's not a good sign. I added five gallons – enough to get home – it was too cold to worry about a fill up. Bought one slice of pizza at the store – that would be it for 'pizza night'. Then it was off to get home – about a 1 1/2 to 2 hour trip. It drizzled half the way home and stopped for the last hour. I'm not a fan of driving in the dark – and worse, driving in the dark with rain/drizzle or even worse, snow and sleet and ice. No thanks! I just listened to the regular car radio and drove toward home. It was late and no mobiles were out anyway. As I got into 'the city' the temperatures

were in the 30s and the rain stopped. That meant probably no slick roads but you can't be sure.

Nothing to report there- made it through the construction zones on 121 OK.....cattle chutes – I hate them – 2 foot clearance either side, moving 50-55 mph for 5 or 10 miles. Home by 7:30.

I took the antenna off the car to get it into the garage. What's this? 1/8th inch of ice coating the mast? Hmmm. Definitely this was a time to hunker down in a nice warm house and not be on the roads.

Nuked a chicken Alfredo box dinner for dinner. It's going to be cold for 2 days..then bouncing up and down from normal to cold.....not a good start of the year here! I can catch up on my reading.

Trip stats:

55 transmitted counties in 4 days. 1666 miles – a few last counties given out. No sunny warm weather found. The sun is out in north TX on Monday – but chilly. The only place in TX is it is raining is the south tip of TX and along the gulf coast this week. Everywhere else is perfectly clear. That plan didn't work out too well for sun/warmth. On the other hand, we and the others out kept the county hunter frequencies humming. When Jerry, W0GXQ, got back home a day later, the wind chill in MN was 30 below zero. Yuk! Texas is chilly – but I'll take 30s and 40s over below zero any day of the week! It was good to put out those south TX counties – been a while since I've done that. Once you get south of San Antonio, there's not much reason to go there other than for sun and warmth – or visiting someone down that way. There's lots of other places in Texas with 'lots of nothing' other than scenery, too!

More trips to come.

Peak Oil News

Industry expert warns of grim future of 'recession' driven 'resource wars' at University College London lecture

A former British Petroleum (BP) geologist has warned that the age of cheap oil is long gone,

bringing with it the danger of “continuous recession” and increased risk of conflict and hunger.

At a lecture on ‘Geohazards’ earlier this month as part of the postgraduate Natural Hazards for Insurers course at University College London (UCL), Dr. Richard G. Miller, who worked for BP from 1985 before retiring in 2008, said that official data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), US Energy Information Administration (EIA), International Monetary Fund (IMF), among other sources, showed that conventional oil had most likely peaked around 2008.

Dr. Miller critiqued the official industry line that global reserves will last 53 years at current rates of consumption, pointing out that “peaking is the result of declining production rates, not declining reserves.” Despite new discoveries and increasing reliance on unconventional oil and gas, 37 countries are already post-peak, and global oil production is declining at about 4.1% per year, or 3.5 million barrels a day (b/d) per year:

“We need new production equal to a new Saudi Arabia every 3 to 4 years to maintain and grow supply... New discoveries have not matched consumption since 1986. We are drawing down on our reserves, even though reserves are apparently climbing every year. Reserves are growing due to better technology in old fields, raising the amount we can recover – but production is still falling at 4.1% p.a. [per annum].”

Dr. Miller, who prepared annual in-house projections of future oil supply for BP from 2000 to 2007, refers to this as the “ATM problem” – “more money, but still limited daily withdrawals.” As a consequence: “Production of conventional liquid oil has been flat since 2008. Growth in liquid supply since then has been largely of natural gas liquids [NGL]- ethane, propane, butane, pentane – and oil-sand bitumen.”

In an introductory paper co-authored with Dr. Steve R. Sorrel, co-director of the Sussex Energy Group at the University of Sussex in Brighton, they argue that among oil industry experts “there is a growing consensus that the era of cheap oil has passed and that we are entering a new and very different phase.” They endorse the conservative conclusions of an extensive earlier study by the government-funded UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC):

“... a sustained decline in global conventional production appears probable before 2030 and there is significant risk of this beginning before 2020... on current evidence the inclusion of tight oil [shale oil] resources appears unlikely to significantly affect this conclusion, partly because the resource base appears relatively modest.”

In fact, increasing dependence on shale could worsen decline rates in the long run:

“Greater reliance upon tight oil resources produced using hydraulic fracturing will exacerbate any rising trend in global average decline rates, since these wells have no plateau and decline extremely fast – for example, by 90% or more in the first 5 years.”

Tar sands will fare similarly, they conclude, noting that “the Canadian oil sands will deliver only 5 mb per day by 2030, which represents less than 6% of the IEA projection of all-liquids production by that date.”

Despite the cautious projection of global peak oil “before 2020”, they also point out that:

“Crude oil production grew at approximately 1.5% per year between 1995 and 2005, but then plateaued with more recent increases in liquids supply largely deriving from NGLs, oil sands and tight oil. These trends are expected to continue... Crude oil production is heavily concentrated in a small number of countries and a small number of giant fields, with approximately 100 fields producing one half of global supply, 25 producing one quarter and a single field (Ghawar in Saudi Arabia) producing approximately 7%. Most of these giant fields are relatively old, many are well past their peak of production, most of the rest seem likely to enter decline within the next decade or so and few new giant fields are expected to be found.”

“The final peak is going to be decided by the price – how much can we afford to pay?”, Dr. Miller told me in an interview about his work. “If we can afford to pay \$150 per barrel, we could certainly produce more given a few years of lead time for new developments, but it would break economies again.”

Miller argues that for all intents and purposes, peak oil has arrived as conditions are such that despite volatility, prices can never return to pre-2004 levels:

“The oil price has risen almost continuously since 2004 to date, starting at \$30. There was a great spike to \$150 and then a collapse in 2008/2009, but it has since climbed to \$110 and held there. The price rise brought a lot of new exploration and development, but these new fields have not actually increased production by very much, due to the decline of older fields. This is compatible with the idea that we are pretty much at peak today. This recession is what peak feels like.”

Although he is dismissive of shale oil and gas’ capacity to prevent a peak and subsequent long decline in global oil production, Miller recognises that there is still some leeway that could bring significant, if temporary dividends for US economic growth – though only as “a relatively short-lived phenomenon”:

“We’re like a cage of lab rats that have eaten all the cornflakes and discovered that you can eat the cardboard packets too. Yes, we can, but... Tight oil may reach 5 or even 6 million b/d in the US, which will hugely help the US economy, along with shale gas. Shale resources, though, are inappropriate for more densely populated countries like the UK, because the industrialisation of the countryside affects far more people (with far less access to alternative natural space), and the economic benefits are spread more thinly across more people. Tight oil production in the US is likely to peak before 2020. There absolutely will not be enough tight oil production to replace the US’ current 9 million b/d of imports.”

In turn, by prolonging global economic recession, high oil prices may reduce demand. Peak demand in turn may maintain a longer undulating oil production plateau:

“We are probably in peak oil today, or at least in the foot-hills. Production could rise a little for a few years yet, but not sufficiently to bring the price down; alternatively, continuous recession in much of the world may keep demand essentially flat for years at the \$110/bbl price we have today. But we can’t grow the supply at average past rates of about 1.5% per year at today’s prices.”

The fundamental dependence of global economic growth on cheap oil supplies suggests that as we continue into the age of expensive oil and gas, without appropriate efforts to mitigate the impacts and transition to a new energy system, the world faces a future of economic and geopolitical turbulence:

“In the US, high oil prices correlate with recessions, although not all recessions correlate with high oil prices. It does not prove causation, but it is highly likely that when the US pays more than 4% of its GDP for oil, or more than 10% of GDP for primary energy, the economy declines as money is sucked into buying fuel instead of other goods and services... A shortage of oil will affect everything in the economy. I expect more famine, more drought, more resource wars and a steady inflation in the energy cost of all commodities.”

According to another study in the Royal Society journal special edition by professor David J. Murphy of Northern Illinois University, an expert in the role of energy in economic growth, the energy return on investment (EROI) for global oil and gas production – the amount of energy produced compared to the amount of energy invested to get, deliver and use that energy – is roughly 15 and declining. For the US, EROI of oil and gas production is 11 and declining; and for unconventional oil and biofuels is largely less than 10. The problem is that as EROI decreases, energy prices increase. Thus, Murphy concludes:

“... the minimum oil price needed to increase the oil supply in the near term is at levels consistent with levels that have induced past economic recessions. From these points, I conclude that, as the EROI of the average barrel of oil declines, long-term economic growth will become harder to achieve and come at an increasingly higher financial, energetic and environmental cost.”

Current EROI in the US, Miller said, is simply “not enough to support the US infrastructure, even if America was self-sufficient, without raising production even further than current consumption.”

In their introduction to their collection of papers in the Royal Society journal, Miller and Sorrell point out that “most authors” in the special edition “accept that conventional oil resources are at an advanced stage of depletion and that liquid fuels will become more

expensive and increasingly scarce.” The shale revolution can provide only “short-term relief”, but is otherwise “unlikely to make a significant difference in the longer term.”

They call for a “coordinated response” to this challenge to mitigate the impact, including “far-reaching changes in global transport systems.” While “climate-friendly solutions to ‘peak oil’ are available” they caution, these will be neither “easy” nor “quick”, and imply a model of economic development that accepts lower levels of consumption and mobility.

Source: <http://investorvillage.com/mbthread.asp?mb=4288&nhValue=127783&nmValue=127823&dValue=1&tid=13405837&showall=1>

Mobile “Cheatum” Calls

I wonder why folks work the 'mee-too' cheat-um station. If you look at the MARAC rules for prefixes, it says:

“To make contacts with **amateur radio operators** who have as the first letter of **their** call sign one of four letters assigned to USA station”

Let's see.....the operator is Ray, FCC assigned callsign AB4YZ. That is HIS assigned call. Does he have a “W” call? No, he has a “A” call. Is the call W4CA assigned to him? No? Doesn't count then for 'w' prefix.

But it gets worse. There's the No-Star award. Does the 'callsign' W4CA have a star? Nope! But the operator does! OOPS!

The rules and the **INTENT** for the No-Star award are:

“To make contacts with amateur radio **operators** who have not received the USA -CA Award and **to encourage new county hunters** to transmit counties while mobile”

Check the rules page yourself. Who is the sort of 'operator' of W4CA? Why it is AB4YZ, with 4 stars. If you work the 'operator', no matter what call he is borrowing at the time.....you still worked someone who has worked all the counties. You are NOT working a newbie. Right? So if you work W4CA and log it as a 'no star', you are cheating. Plain and simple. It doesn't count.

Plain and simple. Black and white. Oh, right, 'logger' logs it. Wrong. You have a brain. Use it. Are you going to get that No Star award with all those bogus contacts in it and have people believe you actually worked 3077 no star counties? Folks listen...and see who works 'both calls'. You and I know you are simply scamming the system looking for a 'cheating way' to get to that W prefix and no star award. Plain and Simple. The Duck Dynasty folks would be all over your case. Look yourself in the mirror tomorrow morning and say to yourself "Am I a cheater? Do I work stations for an award which will have no integrity? Do folks hear me work 'both'?".....if you answer yes, maybe it is time to just start filling in random counties in Logger with random calls. You'll have the same level of integrity. NONE! Oh...you say other 'people' are doing it? Could be. When you hear them work 'both' you know they are cheating. Are you going to be a cheater too?

Does Ray have 'no stars'? Of course not. He's got a pile of them. If you work "W4CA", the operator has a pile of stars. It's not a no-star contact. Of course, Logger isn't smart enough on club calls.(Logger will even log **bogus** 'stars' if someone uses a club call that has USACA, like K9DCJ.) In this case, Logger logs an **INVALID NO STAR** contact when W4CA is worked.

So if it doesn't count for no-star, and it doesn't count for prefixes.....what does it count for? Anyone who works W4CA is just a part of the cheat-um scam if they use logger! Or is brain dead and doesn't follow the rules. **Really now – what good is a no-star award if you let 'ride along' club calls get credit for no star when used by a mobile with stars? That makes a real joke of the award and I wonder when the first no-star award will be issued with 500 contacts in there for W4CA?** If it is one of the folks working W4CA, I will call it a joke and useless award..... 20% of your contacts didn't happen. You might as well just hunt down random calls in QRZ.com and fill them in as 'mobile' contacts for another 500. Same level of honesty.

If I were writing the rules for Logger, I'd simply check to see if something was a 'club call' issued by the FCC and not count it for ANY of the MARAC awards other than Nth th time. Or write a special rule NOT to count W4CA for those two awards. Next, he'll be squeaking in a high voice so you can count it for YL mobile award. Duh! Fortunately, there only seem to be a few 'operators' on the net playing the club call game and Ray is the only one that runs one mobile on a regular basis. I'm really surprised why so many work the 'cheat-um' station! They're 'cheat-um' themselves on the awards. Maybe some day they'll wake up and find that Logger has been fixed and W4CA disappears from the No-Star book and from the "W" prefix awards. Otherwise, the integrity of the MARAC awards will become a joke when someone gets No-Star with 500 contacts for a mobile operator who has four stars now. 500 or more bogus contacts.

Well, enough of the soap box. You'll find that some 'club calls' go mobile in state QSO parties.....but even there, most are run by non-county hunter mobiles and really are no-star mobiles – and that is the ONLY call they use during a contest. Their intent is not to 'cheat-um'

the awards, either.

As far as I can tell, W4CA is the one and only ride along mobile club call this past year who intends to cheat the system. There are about 30 regular county hunters who work “both”. I don't know why. Do you? Other than they like to cheat? Or they see that Logger logs them, so they figure it 'must be good'. You and I know better. So do they. No Star contacts with W4CA are as good as \$3 and \$7 bills.

County Sign Database Project

Gary, K4EXT, added in a slew of new signs this month. Joyce, N9STL sent in about 20 from her trip from IL to FL. She took note of the needs of the county signs and made a special effort to snag them on her trip south. Here's one each from La, AL and GA



N9STL Madison Parish, LA



N9STL - Hale AL



N9STL – Lee, GA (good for NB there)

I had to go to the internet to find out who Luke Bryan and Buster Posey are. Maybe the youngsters would know that right away. Luke Bryan is an award winning country music star – and Buster Posey is a catcher for the San Francisco Giants. OK..learned something new today.

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Mike, NF0N, and Jerry, W0GXQ, took a two day trip around in NE and send in more than six to add to the database.

Here's Mike's home county, Dakota NE



Dakota NE – home county of NF0N (GXQ picture)

Ryan, KB9OWD, sent in one from WI. Here's Iowa, WI



Iowa, WI by KB9OWD

The County Sign Database is located at:

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

Silver, N9QS, dug through his files and sent in another dozen or so for the database from past trips. Here's he's at Riley, KS:



N9QS Riley< KS

Rick, W5QP, took a 2 day trip up to MO in the south central part. He added a half dozen new ones to the database. Here's his mobile at Madison, MO



Rick, W5QP Madison, MO

Sometimes you just can't park on a county line. Here's W5QP on one of the narrow roads in MO with no shoulder on one side to park on, and signs preventing you from parking on the other side.



W5QP Shannon, MO

Looks like a 3 foot shoulder, maybe or not, on the left side and no way to park on the right hand side with the sign blocking where you would have to park to be in both at the same time. Probably near zero traffic but you just can't sit for 20 minutes in the middle of the road. Mo has dozens of these on the small 'letter' and 'double and triple' letter roads, like highway B, CC, and DD and EE.

Scottie, N4AAT, added another six or so to the South Carolina section of the county sign database. Here's N4CD's last county he ran:



N4AAT – Lancaster County Line, SC

Global Lack of Warming – Down Under

Global Warming Down Under is 'Nothing New' – just hype

No doubt we will hear how the current heatwaves in Australia are “unprecedented” and evidence of dangerous man-made global warming.

They are neither “global” nor “unprecedented”.

In the great heatwave of 1896, with nearly 200 deaths, the temperature at Bourke did not fall below 45.6 degC for six weeks, and the maximum was 53.3 degC. Bushfires raged throughout NSW and 66 people perished in the heat.

In 1897, Perth had an 18 day heatwave with a record of 43.3 degC. Other heatwaves were reported at Winton, 1891, Melbourne 1892, Boulia 1901, Sydney 1903, Perth 1906 and so on.

Why don't we hear of these severe heatwaves from the past? Simple – the government Bureau of Meteorology conveniently ignores all temperature records before 1910.

However, that does not excuse our media for neglecting the written records such as these preserved in newspapers of the past.

Could it be that both the BOM and some of the media are still trying to preserve the ailing global warming scare?

Source: <http://wattsupwiththat.com/2014/01/20/australian-heatwaves-are-nothing-new/>

Just heatwaves like in the past.....and the press simply ignores history to go on the global warming rants to keep the hysteria going. Fewer and fewer believe in this stuff every day. For good reason.

On the Trail of Regens

There were a few interesting 'regen' radios that showed up on Ebay this month. Surfing Ebay filled in a lot of days when not a single cw mobile was out there. I'll share a few pictures and comments:

Here's one that was nicely built butlikely isn't going to work all that well, especially on 'shortwave'.



Here's a top view:



It came with one coil and 2 other coil forms. What can you tell from looking at it? Well, a few comments on the 'circuit'. It uses a 6SJ7 pentode tube which is a good tube for a regen detector.

a) You can see the tuning knob. There is no vernier and the tuning will be quite difficult even on the broadcast band. For shortwave, you either need a vernier dial on the main tuning – or you need a 'bandspread' capacitor. The minimum you might get by with even on the broadcast band is a very big knob- like the first broadcast sets from the 20s- five inch diameter knobs.

b) The antenna trim capacitor, seen at the back edge – is buried and the antenna lead just comes out with other wires. This is a very high impedance point and super sensitive to capacity effects and stray pickup. There's not even an antenna connection point.

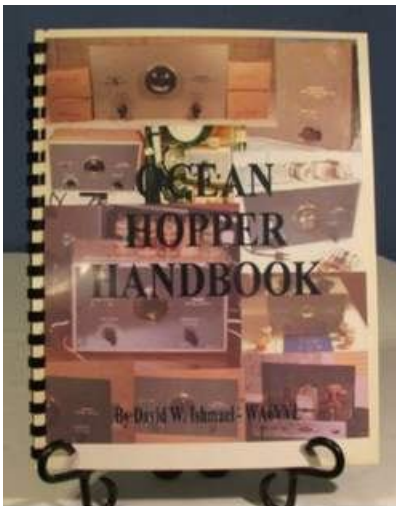
c) The builder did use the metal version of the 6SJ7 – which is good because regen detector tubes pick up any a/c hum from anything within a couple feet.

Overall this would likely be a poor performer on anything above the broadcast band – but if you weren't looking at details you might never know. This sold for \$56 on Ebay with 12 bids.

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There's a cult on the Knight Kit Ocean Hopper. Receivers from the 1950s and 60s. What are folks willing to pay for rare items?

A copy of the WA6VVL "Ocean Hopper" Handbook from the 1994 era – 80 pages of articles about the Ocean Hopper, came up for sale on Ebay



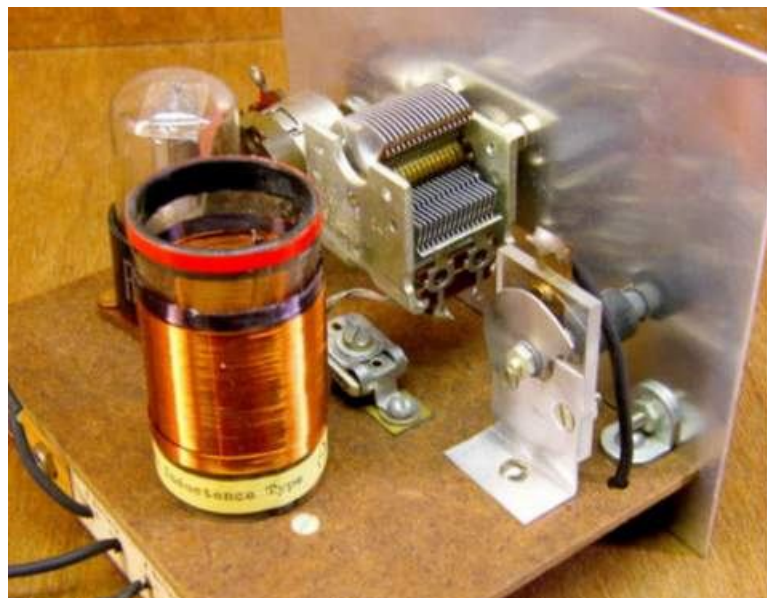
It went for an incredible \$202.50! Plus of course shipping. Total insanity but those Ocean Hopper folks routinely cough up a hundred bucks or more for nice looking sets from the 1950s – that sold for \$7.95 to \$11.95 back in the those days.

Dave, WA6VVL, has published half a dozen articles himself in Electric Radio and other magazines through the years, and has rebuilt a dozen or more Hoppers – stripping them down to the chassis, redoing the chassis – wire brushing it to remove all signs of rust and corrosion, and then rebuilding them with 'right angle' wiring and newer parts – sometimes even going to the trouble of using the old capacitor housings – hollowed out – to put in newer smaller parts inside – so you have the 'original look'. He's the Ocean Hopper 'Expert'. He will even tell you how to repair the 'unobtainium' tube sockets. Knight Kit used El Cheapo wafer sockets that degrade over time. They are a weird size and exact replacements that fit simply don't exist these days. If you break off a pin while rebuilding it.....you are in deep doo-doo. He's actually taken the wafer sockets apart and put in new pins from 'donor sets'. He's a fanatic about having things as 'original' as possible.

I'd like to have a copy of this handbook , but not for over 200 bucks! Maybe 15 – hi hi You never know what will show up at a flea market – I'll just keep looking. Maybe some of the other county hunters out there will keep an eye open when they go hamfesting - too!

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Here's another one tube regen kit that showed up on Ebay. MRL sold lots of crystal radio and one tube kits – very basic. However, they had a lot better circuit design – although very basic it least it had the makings of a decent receiver. We'll compare this to the one above.



You'll note some major differences. This one came with a 'wood chassis' and a wood front panel. This builder used a metal panel (good for eliminating stray capacitance). The circuits are about the same – this one uses a pentode 1Q5 or 1C5 tube – which can run off a 1.5v battery for filament power.

A) you'll note that there is a 'fine tuning' bandspread control on the right side of the picture mounted on a piece of plexiglass and back a bit from the front panel with an insulated shaft. . It's a couple pF so you could easily tune in stations once you found them. The main tuning is a larger capacitor, better for the BC band and long wave – not so great for SW. It's always a compromise but these one tube sets aren't great for 'shortwave' other than the really loud stations.

b) The antenna trimmer is a small compression type – which would be hard to tweak. You really need one you can adjust as changing frequency ranges means the antenna impedance wanders all over the place – and regens like a 'high impedance' appearing input so as not to load down the detector. It's an 'inexpensive' way of doing it – and even the Knight Ocean Hopper had one.

This one came with 8 coils for all the range from LW up through 20 MHz. Sold for over \$175 plus, of course, shipping. Wow!

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Here is how to ruin a 'classic radio' in a few easy steps. This is a Meissner Midget up for sale on Ebay. Highly modified.



Meissner Midget

The original set used two type triode 76 tubes – which are five pin tubes – 6.3v filaments. It used a resistive line cord to drop the 120v down to 12v for the two tubes in series. They were popular in the 1930s and into the 1940s. There was a third nichrome resistance wire in the line cord. It would get very 'warm' dropping the voltage.

Somewhere along the line – whoever had this radio – or the last person made major changes to it.

From the Ebay listing:

“Up for auction is this modernized Meissner Midget 2-Tube Regenerative Receiver. The receiver has been safely electrified using a Stancor midget transformer. Measured B+ is 180 volts. The receiver is fitted with a pair of 6G6G tubes and comes with 3 coils covering 200-545 meters, 70-200 meters and 17-30 meters. Included is a nice set of S.G. Brown Type F headphones. Construction is excellent using quality components. I have received several shortwave stations using a short piece of wire. The receiver produces plenty of volume and the audio is clear. I will include the schematic and extra documentation. A fun little piece of nostalgia. There is a chip in the main tuning dial that may not be apparent in the pictures. This item is sold as-is with no returns or refunds. “

So let's note what's been changed – most for the worst

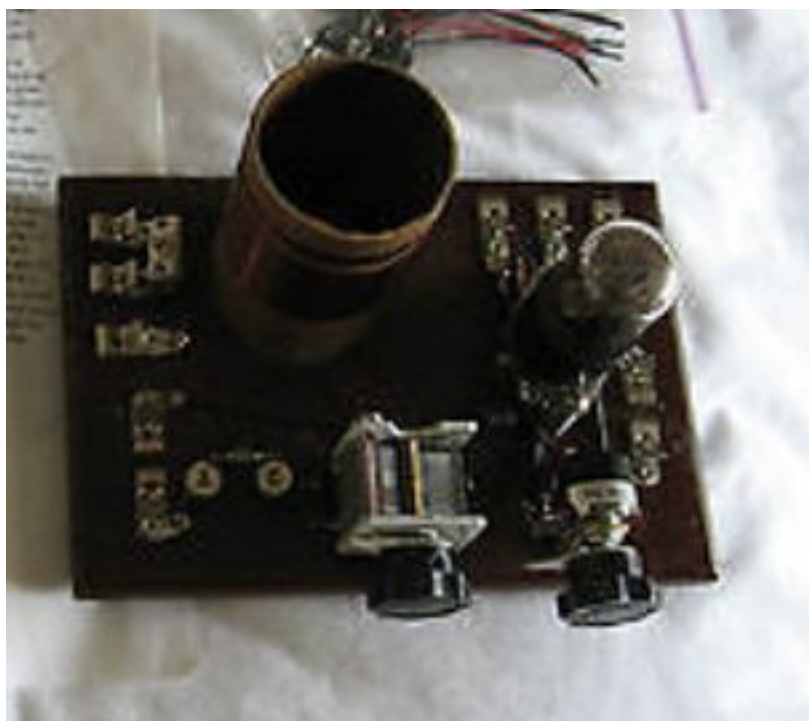
- a) The resistive line cord has been eliminated. OK. Many folks did that and brought out the filament leads to an external 6.3 or 12v filament transformer. Not a major issue as those resistive line cords were dangerous and likely aren't too safe today. Regen detectors pick up him, so you want any power transformer far away.
- b) The tube sockets were changed from five pins to octal sockets for the new pentode tubes. I'm not sure why you'd need a pentode simply for a rectifier, but that is what they did, putting in 6G6's instead of the type 76 tubes.
- c) A power transformer was put behind the front panel, kluged in. Likely radiates a field that is picked up by the coil/detector resulting in lots of hum in the radio.
- d) the headphones are directly wired in through a hole and grommet on the front panel. No way to disconnect them. Normally there were 'pin jacks' on the back for the earphones. It was removed and the on/off switch installed there.
- e) An on/off switch has been added on the rear panel.

So when you get done, about the only thing original on this is the chassis, tuning cap and coil and the knobs. Everything else has been changed. The only redeeming feature of this listing is that comes with three of the 'unobtainium' style plug in coils. Asking price was \$100 to start.

Sold for \$100 on Ebay. Plus, of course, shipping.

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Here's another regen that showed up on Ebay



You'll see it's a simple one tube set – this one using a 1C5 pentode tube in a very simple arrangement. It appears to be a kit of some type with a pre-drilled wood base for the parts supplied and “Fahnestock” clips for all the connections. It's as simple as you get. The radio came with two pages of typed instructions including the schematic – but nothing else. Takes 1.5v for the filament and 45v (5 9v batteries in series) for the B+ and uses 2000 ohm headphones – the old style. Covers the broadcast band. On the left lower corner is an added crystal detector, if you want to hook it up as a crystal radio. Maybe someday I'll see an add for this.

I don't have a clue as to who made it definitely but 'could' be an early MRL or a Knight or Lafayette kit from the 40's or early 50's. It stumped me. At this point, I'm leaning toward an early MRL set. Went for \$20 on Ebay at 'Buy it Now’ and quickly went into the N4CD collection at that price.

After You Finish First Time, What then?

After the long hard grind to getting all those counties confirmed the first time, what do you do then? It seems about 1/3rd of the folks who finish up just fade away from county hunting – if not then, within a few years. They reached their goal. Maybe they only joined county hunting to get yet one more award after 5BDXCC, 5BWAS, 160M WAS, DXCC on the WARC bands and 160 and 6m, etc. They are off to new challenges. However, that means about 2/3rds of county hunters become 'addicted' and keep working on higher awards now issued by MARAC. The USA-CA is sponsored by CQ Magazine and has been since the beginning where it came up with the award.

So what should be your next 'goal' after first time? To some extent, that depends how often and how important going 'mobile' is to you. When you first start out as a mobile, you are actually 'wanted' these days for the No-Star award, which requires that you be a 'new comer' without having worked all the counties. Contacts must be with mobile or portable stations that have not earned USACA – that can be newbie county hunters, folks going mobile in state QSO parties but no other CH activity, or working random mobiles on various bands or portable stations like lighthouses, special events not at a 'fixed' station location, and similar. They must be mobile or portable.

So going mobile as a new comer allows you to give out contacts for awards that more experienced county hunters can't give (unless, of course, they scam the system with bogus club calls that have been around for decades – more on that later). You're 'valuable' and no one yet has earned the no-star award! There are likely hundreds of counties needed yet – including maybe many in your neck of the woods. Running counties now will help you, too, with awards in the future.

Most people after finishing the first time likely start working on 'Second Time' – working all the counties again – but this time no confirmation is needed so the process goes a lot faster. You can work all those state QSO party stations and not worry about a poor rate of return on MRCs and chase others in different contests like AK and HI in DX contests. It's a whole lot easier. Some may be working on 'all cw'. Or all SSB or digital. You can be working on them all at the same time, and for All CW – all your contacts count since day one – those ones way back when. For second time, you can't start on that until you finish the first time, naturally. Everyone still on board?

Once you have earned your USA-CA, you are good for 'one star'. There is a MARAC award for working a total of Five Stars in each county. You can do that by working five people, each with one, or one person with 5, or any combination totaling at least five stars. The more stars you have as a mobile, the more 'valuable' you become when you go out. The MARAC Logger program automatically tracks this. In the past, there was a Five Star book from the B&B shop so you could track in manually if you wanted.

There are other MARAC awards, too, including prefixes and call combos. Logger will keep track of all of them. If you go out mobile, even as a newbie, some folks might need your prefix for a county – or you call combo (2x1, 2x2, 2x3, 1x2, 1x3). You never know. Or your prefix in a particular county. There are lots of reasons to work mobiles (and even fixed stations in state QSO parties – they count for everything except the no-star award). Some of the other awards, like the prefixes, might take you quite a while. Only a few county hunters have finished them off, but more and more are working on it, so more should get done. They might need a nearby county to you for a prefix.

There are 100 different MARAC awards to work toward. Only a few require that you first get one award before working on the next one. Obviously, you can't start working on the Second Time until you finish the first time. Or the 'next time around' until you finish what you are working on. You can't start working on some until you have 'climbed the awards ladder' and we'll go into the first few of them. That leaves you still with nearly 100 awards to work on from the day you turn your radio on for the first time. Now on to the 'ladder awards'.

Master County Hunter Award – Bingo

After people finish, and keep county hunting, the next award to focus on is the “Bingo” Award - for several reasons. It will allow you to start working on the next award beyond. It will make you more 'valuable' as a mobile when you go out. It should have higher priority to you than finishing the second time. Keep in mind that you can be working on the Bingo Award – and Logger will track it for you, or you can do it manually (tougher to track) – and all your contacts count for the Bingo award from the day you got your license.

Now let's get into the Bingo Award – The Master County Hunter Award – one of the older ones. If you can easily explain this to a non-county hunter or a new one, you are 'in the know'. The rules are, well, a bit complicated. To get this award, you need to work a station in everyone of the 3077 US Counties that meets that following criteria:

In the call, one of the letters of the county are contained:

a) In the suffix of a 1x3 call or 2x3 call

b) Anywhere in a 1x2, 2x2 or 2x1 call

Example: For Collin County, Texas – a “C” county, the calls N4CH, AC5WD, WB3KQC, would all be good for Bingo in C counties

c) Repeated Letters – if the operators call contains repeated letters, as in KB9RRI, that call with the “RR” is also good for Bingo in counties with the preceding letter “Q” and the

following letter “S”, as well as for counties starting with R and I. .

Is your head spinning yet? Here's a few more ways that a mobile is good for Bingo in a county.

wild cards:

1) The operator of the station, using his own call, has a 'star' (ie, worked all the counties and thus has a USA-CA number. Thus, N4CD, where the operator has a 'star' or more, would be good for Bingo in every county.

2) A call that has a X in the call, is good for Bingo in every county. Thus, calls like WB4X, WA2SXN, KX7Q, would be good everywhere.

Then you throw in a few 'minor details'. In counties with multiple words, like Lake of the Woods, MN, an “L” or “O” or “W” will be good. As long as you match the first letter of one of the words – it's a good Bingo contact. Alaska is a special case, too with the 'districts'.

You can start counting contacts for Bingo from day one. All of the contacts you log while working on USACA count toward Bingo. There is no time you cannot be 'collecting' those counties.

Is there a reason to earn the Bingo Award? Definitely. For two reasons. It makes you more valuable as a mobile – you are now 'good for the Master Gold Award' . It also allows you to earn county credit for the Master Gold Award as a mobile when you transmit from counties.

OK....now you're climbing up 'the awards ladder'. For fixed stations who never go mobile, they can still earn the Master Gold Award – the next step up the ladder. Beyond that – well, it's limited to 'mobiles'. So let's touch briefly on Masters Gold. It's a different type of award. You've got to work a whole lot harder to get this one!

Master Gold Award

To be able to start on this award, you must have one star (USACA) and the Bingo Award in hand. Only then can you get to work on this one. Only contacts made after you get your Bingo count. That's why it is important to focus on Bingo from the start.

This is a 'service award'. Not everyone is going to be able to earn this award as there are two parts to it that require 'giving back' to the county hunter community – not just sitting on your butt collecting counties without helping others. There are two parts to this.

The first part is working someone in every county (after you get Bingo/Star) who has their

Bingo/Star award **OR** working someone from a county who has Bingo/Star award. This is the first award where you can get credit for the county you are in – for an award- by working someone else. Nifty, isn't it? Those close in counties are no longer a problem to get – simply drive to them, and transmit from them and make the required contact! Then you get credit for it! All contacts for this must have been made after 1994 – not a problem for new county hunters, right! Need that county 100 miles away? Go mobile there and work a 'qualifying contact' and, by golly, you get credit for it.

The second part of the award involves getting 1500 hours/points - which you earn by being of service to the County Hunting community. You can do this in several ways:

a) You get one point for each hour you are Net Control or assistant net control on a 'county hunting' net- cw or SSB, any band. You get credit for 10 minutes for moving a mobile off frequency and helping with relays or doing so on a regular net when assistance is needed You can do it on cw or SSB. To get credit, you must announce the mobile, spot the mobile if possible, and do relays for the mobile if asked. It's 'helping out'. It's moving mobiles off frequency or helping with relays.

b) You can get credit as a MARAC Officer/Director, committee Member, Convention Host, Newsletter Editor, Historian, etc. See rules for number of hours/hr credit given

c) You can get credit - 1 point – for each transmitted county. You can run a county up to 50 times on different days and get credit for it.

Most people likely use a combination of points/hours totaling 1500 or more to qualify for the award.

Now, one of the pieces of advice I give to newcomers is transmit from every county you go through if possible. Same route back as coming? Makes no difference. Run it on a different band or mode, or same band/same mode. Get the credit for an extra transmitted county. Some day, you'll wish you did if you haven't, kicking yourself for all those counties you went through that you thought no one needed that day. There may come a time when you are getting close to working all the counties for Masters Gold...and come up short on points. One contact is 'enough' but try to honestly 'put out the county' on at least one band/mode. You can run the same county up to 50 times for this award.

That's enough 'climbing the awards' ladder at this point. There are two more awards beyond the Masters Gold now – Master Platinum and Mobile Diamond. More challenges! Tougher to get, too! By the time you get to those, you probably are familiar with those rules so no need to cover that territory now.

On the Road with N4CD II

January 21 was a Monday – the Martin Luther King federal holiday – and the forecast was for 70 degree temps with lots of sun. I was planning on going over to the town gym....but it dawned on me it wouldn't be open on a 'holiday'.

One can't sit at home and bemoan the lack of mobiles on a day like that, so I packed up the car for a short trip over to Delta County, TX from the home QTH – about a 2 or 2 1/2 hour drive depending upon traffic, traffic jams, construction, and state of mind of the driver.

No mail comes on the holiday – and no Wall Street Journal. I had a nice breakfast, went into the hamshack and checked the K3IMC forum and W6RK spotting site.. Doug, WA4UNS was up in NJ putting them out. Percival, KA1 Just Plain Rotten, was running mobiles off 14.336 and trying to find a mobile ready to run on 'the net'. It was pretty quiet for a while. Posted a note about heading to Delta County – and K5YAA replied “That CD is on the loose again! “

Hollis, KC3X, needed Delta for Mobile Diamond but there weren't too many others listed. It's one of those small countries in TX that there aren't too many reasons to go to. It's mostly farm land and rural - some of it real rural – and it has a few rivers that can flood over parts of the country. Otherwise, it's mostly flat with just a bit of hills here and there. There were no other needs posted in TX for the counties northeast of the QTH.

So it was off to Delta TX about 9:30am. It took a while to get from McKinney over to Greenville in Hunt County – after a stop on the Collin/Hunt county line I try to remember to run the home county every now and then. Ten years ago, it was two lane nearly all the way. Now it is mostly 4 lane, and in some places six lane, and they added in at least 20 traffic lights. That part of Texas is suffering growth pains from the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex expanding outward by a mile a year.

From Greenville and then Commerce, it was up route 24 to the county line of Delta. It looks like a wet line, but with the shifting river beds, a lot of the lines here are no longer at the current river, but where it was 80 years ago. No problem. Not many needed Collin or Hunt – just ran them a few weeks ago on another 2 day trip in TX. Ran Delta by itself.

Dick, N8ESR, was running up in MI putting out counties on 14.336. Doug, WA4UNS, was running in NJ – usually 14272 SSB, 7188 SSB with lots of activity back east, and 17M SSB and CW. A passer by mobile, W3DTK, was headed from the Baltimore area down to the Memphis TX vicinity using the interstates. WC5B, a big rig, put out one or two. Jim, WY8I, was helping out with relays.

You've got good data coverage within 100 miles of Dallas in TX, so you can spot yourself easily. On the last trip down in far south TX, most of the counties had no coverage at all or just in the larger towns. Sometimes no cellphone either, but usually cellphone but no data service to use for the spotting pad.

Had a lunch of one tangerine, one apple, and one pear while sitting in Delta. Healthy. Working on the 'bulge' from indulging on all those Super 8 waffles. Fruit is supposed to be good for you and only about 60-80 calories per.

After Delta, it was off to get Fannin – a 20 mile drive – and then on to get Grayson with a 3 mile detour off the main route before heading on home. Ran the counties on 20/17/30/a and 40cw, and on 20M SSB off net as well. Tried 17m SSB once too – band was really congested – lots of folks on for the holiday and propagation is good there.

In Delta, I had a good run, and Hollis struck that county off his needs list. Slowly I'm getting him done in TX. The windows were wide open at the county line with 68 degrees and sun! Can't complain at all for the weather this day. We'll make up for it with some below normal weather – low 30s and 40s – in the next few days. It averages out.

After 4 1/2 hours of lazy county hunting (running the counties stopped while enjoying the nice day) I was back home after 140 miles. Filled up the gas tank with 4.2 gallons so I'm ready for the next trip. Going to be much colder for the next 5-7 days so we'll see. Maybe even some 'wintry weather'. It's still winter. When you get a beautiful day, make the most of it.

New Computer Chips Mimic Brain

Computer chip that carries out tasks without being asked - and learns from its mistakes - to go on sale. The chip can mimic the human ability for perception, action, and thought. It will improve everything from navigation to speech, and facial recognition.

The chip's memory will function as synapses would in the brain, with processors acting as neurons

It could also one day create systems that perform better than humans

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Computers are about to enter an age where they can perceive, act and even think for themselves, using a network similar to the human brain.

The likes of Google and Facebook are already using the principles of neuroscience to develop artificial brains that they hope will be able to solve their data issues.

Now, San Diego-based Qualcomm is planning to launch the first ever commercial chip inspired by the human brain. The chip, which the New York Times has reported will be launched later this year, will be able to automate tasks that currently require painstaking programming. Crucially, it will also be able to mimic the human ability for perception, action, and thought.

In practice, this means it will be able to avoid and tolerate errors to dramatically improve everything from facial and speech recognition to navigation and planning. In the longer term, the approach will pave the way for artificial intelligence systems that can perform tasks in the same way, or even better, than humans do.

The chip, currently being developed by a consortium led by IBM in partnership with Qualcomm, is inspired by the human brain using an interconnected, configurable network of 'neurosynaptic cores.' The chip's memory functions as synapses would in the brain, the processors as neurons and communication as nerve fibers.

These chips attempt to replicate and improve the brain's ability to respond to biological sensors, analyzing vast amounts of data from many sources at once.

IBM has also announced a new programming architecture for these chips, allowing developers to design applications once they are released later this year.

'While complementing today's computers, this will bring forth a fundamentally new technological capability in terms of programming and applying emerging learning systems,' said Dr Modha.

The computers used today were designed decades ago for processing based on steps, set by a pre-defined program. Although they are fast and precise 'number crunchers,' they struggle to deal with real-time processing of the 'noisy, voluminous, big data produced by the world around us.'

In contrast, our brains - which operate comparatively slowly and at low precision - excel at tasks such as recognising, interpreting, and acting upon patterns. Overall the brain consumes the same amount of power as a 20 watt light bulb. A computer, meanwhile, uses 99 per cent of its volume for cooling and powering, and only one per cent to process information

Using progressively bigger supercomputers, IBM had previously simulated 40 per cent of a mouse's brain in 2006, a rat's full brain in 2007, and one per cent of a human's cerebral cortex in 2009.

Eventually, computer scientists want to use the chip to build a system that can mimic the entire brain, using ten billion 'neurons' and hundred trillion 'synapses'.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2532550/Computer-chip-carries-tasks-without-asked-learns-mistakes.html#ixzz2pG2ZYQiy>

Sunspots & Propagation

01/06/2014

The 10.7 centimeter solar flux index (SFI) jumped to a Cycle 24 record of 262 on January 4, suggesting that Cycle 24 has not yet begun drawing to a close and may be approaching or at a "second peak." The previous peak for the current cycle was 190 on September 24, 2011. As NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) explains, the flux of the sun's radio emissions at 10.7 centimeter (2.8 GHz) is another indicator of solar activity levels, since it tends to follow changes in the solar ultraviolet that influence Earth's upper atmosphere and ionosphere.

"Many models of the upper atmosphere use the 10.7 cm flux (F10.7) as input to determine atmospheric densities and satellite drag," NASA/MSFC notes, adding that SFI "has been shown to follow the sunspot number quite closely." The January 6 sunspot count was 225. The Cycle 24 sunspot count peaked at 282 on November 17, 2013, according to WM7D.net.

Canada's Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory (DRAO) indicated an "official" flux of 262 at 2000 UTC on Saturday, January 3. The official figure for Sunday, January 5, was 217.5. ARRL solar observer Tad Cook, K7RA, who reports 10.7 centimeter flux numbers in his weekly "Solar Update" bulletins, suggests that they are not as valuable as sunspot numbers in predicting radio propagation. The solar flux over the weekend was far higher than what was anticipated, judging by predictions Cook reported in his January 3 "Solar Update" for this past weekend and the week ahead. NASA/MSFC indicates a 95 percent predicted flux for the month of January at 146.5, continuing at about the same level through the first half of the year.

The Daily DX says the SFI is expected to remain above 200 for the next week (220, 220, 215, 215, 215, 205 and 200 for Monday through Sunday). "The last time the SFI was above 200 was during Solar Cycle 23 in late October 2003, for about a week ranging from 210 to 298," The

Daily DX reported January 6. Editor Bernie McClenny, W3UR, cites the recollections of Frank Donovan, W3LPL, who recalled SFI numbers above 200 were common 12 years ago during the second peak of Cycle 23, from mid-October 2001 through mid February 2002. It was during that period that the last instance of “almost-daily transatlantic” F2 propagation took place on 6 meters.

As Ian Poole, G3YWX, explained solar flux in his article, “Understanding Solar Indices” in the September 2002 edition of QST, “[H]igh values generally indicate there is sufficient ionization to support long-distance communication at higher-than-normal frequencies.” He pointed out, though, that it can take a few days of high values for conditions to show improvement. “Typically values in excess of 200 will be measured during the peak of a sunspot cycle, with high values of up to 300 being experienced for shorter periods,” Poole wrote.

Source: ARRL Newsletter – ARRL, Inc, Newington, CT

Super Computer News

The NSA appears to regard itself as running neck and neck with quantum computing labs sponsored by the European Union and the Swiss government, with steady progress but little prospect of an immediate breakthrough.

The documents, however, indicate that the agency carries out some of its research in large, shielded rooms known as Faraday cages, which are designed to prevent electromagnetic energy from coming in or out. Those, according to one brief description, are required “to keep delicate quantum computing experiments running.”

The basic principle underlying quantum computing is known as “quantum superposition,” the idea that an object simultaneously exists in all states. A classical computer uses binary bits, which are either zeroes or ones. A quantum computer uses quantum bits, or qubits, which are simultaneously zero and one.

This seeming impossibility is part of the mystery that lies at the heart of quantum theory, which even theoretical physicists say no one completely understands.

“If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don’t understand quantum mechanics,” said the late Nobel laureate Richard Feynman, who is widely regarded as the pioneer in quantum computing.

Here's how it works, in theory: While a classical computer, however fast, must do one calculation at a time, a quantum computer can sometimes avoid having to make calculations that are unnecessary to solving a problem. That allows it to home in on the correct answer much more quickly and efficiently.

Quantum computing is so difficult to attain because of the fragile nature of such computers. In theory, the building blocks of such a computer might include individual atoms, photons or electrons. To maintain the quantum nature of the computer, these particles would need to be carefully isolated from their external environments.

"Quantum computers are extremely delicate, so if you don't protect them from their environment, then the computation will be useless," said Daniel Lidar, a professor of electrical engineering and the director of the Center for Quantum Information Science and Technology at the University of Southern California.

A working quantum computer would open the door to easily breaking the strongest encryption tools in use today, including a standard known as RSA, named for the initials of its creators. RSA scrambles communications, making them unreadable to anyone but the intended recipient, without requiring the use of a shared password. It is commonly used in Web browsers to secure financial transactions and in encrypted e-mails. RSA is used because of the difficulty of factoring the product of two large prime numbers. Breaking the encryption involves finding those two numbers. This cannot be done in a reasonable amount of time on a classical computer.

In 2009, computer scientists using classical methods were able to discover the primes within a 768-bit number, but it took almost two years and hundreds of computers to factor it. The scientists estimated that it would take 1,000 times longer to break a 1,024-bit encryption key, which is commonly used for online transactions.

A large-scale quantum computer, however, could theoretically break a 1,024-bit encryption much faster. Some leading Internet companies are moving to 2,048-bit keys, but even those are thought to be vulnerable to rapid decryption with a quantum computer.

Quantum computers have many applications for today's scientific community, including the creation of artificial intelligence. But the NSA fears the implications for national security.

"The application of quantum technologies to encryption algorithms threatens to dramatically impact the US government's ability to both protect its communications and eavesdrop on the communications of foreign governments," according to an internal document provided by Snowden.

Experts are not sure how soon a quantum computer would be feasible. A decade ago, some

experts said that developing a large quantum computer was likely 10 to 100 years in the future. Five years ago, Lloyd said the goal was at least 10 years away.

Last year, Jeff Forshaw, a professor at the University of Manchester, told Britain's Guardian newspaper, "It is probably too soon to speculate on when the first full-scale quantum computer will be built but recent progress indicates that there is every reason to be optimistic."

"I don't think we're likely to have the type of quantum computer the NSA wants within at least five years, in the absence of a significant breakthrough maybe much longer," Lloyd told The Post in a recent interview.

However, some companies claim to already be producing small quantum computers. A Canadian company, D-Wave Systems, says it has been making quantum computers since 2009. In 2012, it sold a \$10 million version to Google, NASA and the Universities Space Research Association, according to news reports.

That quantum computer, however, would never be useful for breaking public key encryption like RSA. "Even if everything they're claiming is correct, that computer, by its design, cannot run Shor's algorithm," said Matthew Green, a research professor at the Johns Hopkins Information Security Institute, referring to the algorithm that could be used to break encryption like RSA.

Experts think that one of the largest hurdles to breaking encryption with a quantum computer is building a computer with enough qubits, which is difficult given the very fragile state of quantum computers. By the end of September, the NSA expected to be able to have some basic building blocks, which it described in a document as "dynamical decoupling and complete quantum control on two semiconductor qubits."

"That's a great step, but it's a pretty small step on the road to building a large-scale quantum computer," Lloyd said. A quantum computer capable of breaking cryptography would need hundreds or thousands more qubits than that.

The budget for the National Intelligence Program, commonly referred to as the "black budget," details the "Penetrating Hard Targets" project and noted that this step "will enable initial scaling towards large systems in related and follow-on efforts."

Another project, called the "Owning the Net," is using quantum research to support the creation of new quantum-based attacks on encryptions like RSA, documents show.

"The irony of quantum computing is that if you can imagine someone building a quantum computer that can break encryption a few decades into the future, then you need to be worried right now," Lidar said.

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Here's some information on Quantum Computing from D-Wave:

Quantum computers have similarities to and differences from this CMOS transistor idea. Figure 1 shows a schematic illustration of what is known as a superconducting qubit (also called a SQUID), which is the basic building block of a quantum computer (a quantum 'transistor', if you like). The name SQUID comes from the phrase Superconducting Quantum Interference Device. The term 'Interference' refers to the electrons - which behave as waves inside a quantum waves, interference patterns which give rise to the quantum effects. The reason that quantum effects such as electron waves are supported in such a structure - allowing it to behave as a qubit - is due to the properties of the material from which it is made. The large loop in the diagram is made from a metal called niobium (in contrast to conventional transistors which are mostly made from silicon). When this metal is cooled down, it becomes what is known as a superconductor, and it starts to exhibit quantum mechanical effects.

A regular transistor allows you to encode 2 different states (using voltages). The superconducting qubit structure instead encodes 2 states as tiny magnetic fields, which either point up or down. We call these states +1 and -1, and they correspond to the two states that the qubit can 'choose' between. Using the quantum mechanics that is accessible with these structures, we can control this object so that we can put the qubit into a superposition of these two states as described earlier. So by adjusting a control knob on the quantum computer, you can put all the qubits into a superposition state where it hasn't yet decided which of those +1, -1 states to be.

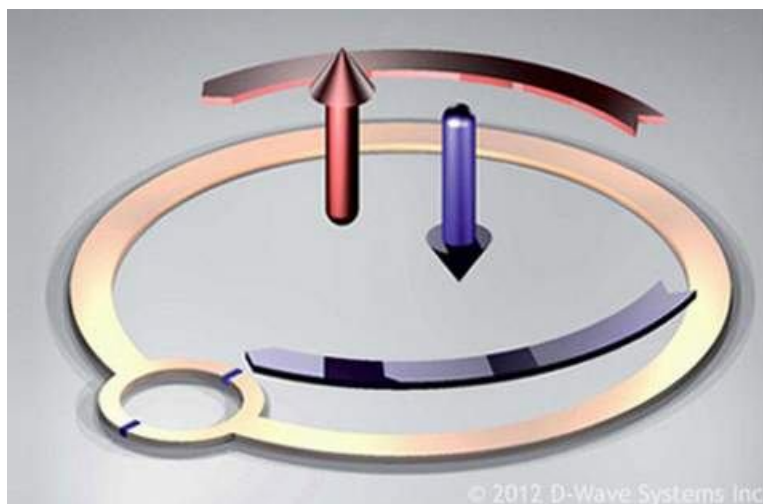


Figure 1 Qbit circuit

In order to go from a single qubit to a multi-qubit processor, the qubits must be connected together such that they can exchange information. This is achieved through the use of elements known as couplers. The couplers are also made from superconducting loops. By putting many such elements (qubits and couplers) together, we can start to build up a fabric of quantum devices that are programmable.

More if you are interested at:

<http://www.dwavesys.com/en/dev-tutorial-hardware.html>

W100AW Hits the Airwaves

At the stroke of midnight Eastern Time on January 1, Hiram Percy Maxim Memorial station W1AW at ARRL Headquarters in Newington took to the air to debut its special ARRL Centennial call sign, W100AW. ARRL Chief Executive Officer Dave Sumner, K1ZZ and Membership and Volunteer Programs Manager Dave Patton, NN1N, and ARRL Station Manager Joe Carcia, NJ1Q, were at the helm into the wee hours of New Year's Day. ARRL Station Manager Joe Carcia, NJ1Q, makes the very first W100AW QSO just after midnight local time on January 1, 2014. [Sean Kutzko, KX9X, photo]

Daylight hours saw ARRL Chief Operating Officer Harold Kramer, WJ1B; Membership and Volunteer Programs Assistant Manager Norm Fusaro, W3IZ; Public Relations Manager Sean Kutzko; KX9X and QST Editor in Chief Steve Ford, WB8IMY, taking their turns at the operating positions. By mid-afternoon, several thousand contacts were in the log on SSB, CW and RTTY.

"This is just the beginning," said Kutzko. "Hams will hear W100AW throughout 2014 on every mode possible. When you hear us, spot us on the cluster!"

Not surprising, 20 meter SSB yielded the most contacts -- 1121 of the 3700 logged -- during the 19 hours of New Year's Day operation from W100AW. Ten meter phone was in second place with 639 contacts.

W100AW contacts will be uploaded to Logbook of The World (LoTW). QSL cards sent by mail will be acknowledged as well.

The ARRL Centennial "W1AW WAS" operations are taking place throughout 2014 from each

of the 50 states, relocating each Wednesday (UTC) to a new pair of states (this week, South Carolina and Utah. Listen for W1AW/4 and W1AW/7). During 2014 W1AW will be on the air from every state at least twice and from most US territories, and it will be easy to work all states solely by contacting W1AW portable operations.

In conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the ARRL, the ARRL Centennial QSO Party also kicked off January 1 for a year-long operating event in which participants can accumulate points and win awards. The event is open to all, although only ARRL members and appointees, elected officials, HQ staff and W1AW are worth ARRL Centennial QSO Party points. Working W1AW/x from each state is worth 5 points per contact.

To earn the "Worked all States with W1AW Award," work W1AW operating portable from all 50 states. (Working W1AW or W100AW in Connecticut does not count for Connecticut, however. For award credit, participants must work W1AW/1 in Connecticut.) A W1AW WAS certificate and plaque will be available (pricing not yet available).

Some Statistics

As of today (January 9), more than 6700 stations have earned points in the Centennial QSO Party by uploading qualifying QSOs to Logbook of The World (LoTW). Operating from North Carolina and West Virginia during the first week of the W1AW portable operations, W1AW/4 and W1AW/8 logged approximately 33,000 contacts.

"The second week is off to a roaring start from South Carolina and Utah," reported ARRL Membership and Volunteer Programs Manager Dave Patton, NN1N.

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Note: This call could gum up a few logging programs if they can't handle the number, or something like W100AW/7 being spotted. The call will be in use all of 2014 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ARRL in every state.

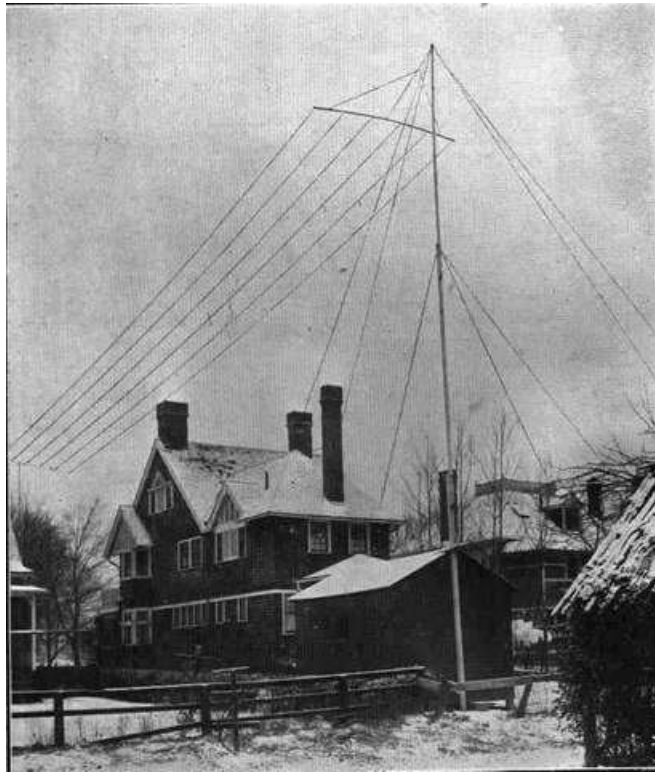
Source: ARRL Newsletter January 2014 – courtesy ARRL, Inc, Newington, CT 06111

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Jerry, K5YAA, announced he will be participating in putting out OKLA with the W1AW/5 call so folks can get the credit for his state.

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This is what Hiram Percy Maxim's antenna looked like in 1914



1WH – (later W1AW) station in 1914

1WH was a private call in 1914.....well, a bit later....they didn't even use the W prefix back then. Later, he became W1AW

From the ARRL Newsletter:

After Guglielmo Marconi proved the feasibility of radio communication in 1901, three distinct groups of radio experimenters and stations appeared: The US Navy, commercial operators, and Amateur Radio operators, derisively called "hams" (meaning bad operators) by commercial and Navy operators. Early hams took up the name with pride!

Soon there was chaos in the ether, as hams interfered with commercial and Navy stations. To curb that problem, Congress passed the Radio Act of 1912, requiring all amateurs to get licenses and to operate at wavelengths of 200 meters or shorter, spectrum considered worthless at the time.

When hams first began to pass message traffic, the typical ham station's range was measured in

tens of miles, or a few hundred miles for the best-equipped stations. So hams would relay messages from station to station until they reached their destination.

ARRL Co-Founder Hiram Percy Maxim.

One night in April 1914, Hiram Percy Maxim, 1WH, in Hartford, Connecticut, was unable to contact a station in Springfield, Massachusetts, to send a message. Maxim reached another ham at the midway point of Windsor Locks, Connecticut, and that station successfully relayed the message to Springfield.

This event made Maxim realize that there should be an organization to promote smooth and reliable message relays. In April 1914 he presented his thoughts to the Radio Club of Hartford, which agreed to sponsor the activity, using the name Maxim chose -- the American Radio Relay League. In February 1915, the ARRL separated from the HRC, and incorporated as a nonprofit entity.

By March 1915, it became obvious that a publication was required to disseminate information to the 600 relay stations on the ARRL's roster. Maxim and Clarence D. Tuska (HRC Secretary) privately funded the first three issues of QST to meet that need. The first issue was published in December 1915.

Source: ARRL Newsletter, Jan 16, 2014, courtesy of ARRL, Newington, CT 06111

The Spirit of Mawson Fiasco

The latest 'greenie' and 'warmist' double failure.

In the news recently was the episode of multiple ships getting caught 'in the ice' in Antarctica – during a stunt trip of global warming 'scientists' and 'researchers' and 'wannabees' during the southern hemisphere summer. They could get no closer than 45 miles from the point that was ice free a century ago. So much for 'all the ice is melting'. At this point, the ice extends out another 50 miles – and the ship was caught in solid ice 17 feet thick! Mawson sailed right up to the coast, anchored in shallow water, and conducted his expedition with no problems a century ago.

You probably heard that this was a Russian ship full of 'tourists'. Wrong. The *Lame Stream*

media went into full 'cover up' mode to not tell it it was nothing but global warming advocates looking for 'evidence' of global warming'. They didn't find any and in fact found just the opposite, but they won't tell you anything about that. The few classified as 'tourists' were ultra greenie activists while the rest were credentialed greenie alleged pseudo 'scientists'.

Can we please drop the misconception that this jaunt had anything to do with "science"? It was, from beginning to when it went pear-shaped, a propaganda exercise designed to counter growing climate skepticism, run jointly by Twerkey, the University of NSW (UNSW), the BBC and the ABC, with backup from the Guardian and Fairfax newspapers.

The UNSW provided \$1.5 million in seed capital. Twerkey provided the pseudo-scientific veneer, the ABC provided the technicians - camera operators and sound technicians, and the BBC provided one of their chief talking heads as "anchor" - one Andrew Luck-Baker. Given this guy is the BBC's latest incarnation of Sir David Attenborough, you can safely assume he had his own hair stylist and make-up artist on board as well. Plus a twenty-something "research assistant".

Also on board were journalists from the Guardian and Fairfax... There is never enough money for these block-buster extravaganzas... So Twerkey hit on the idea of advertising for PhD students, science teachers and the like, to pay their own fares... so they could be unpaid TV film extras expedition research assistants. The response was so overwhelming Twerkey had to employ... Greg Mortimer to vet the applications and pick the "best team". Those lucky enough to be amongst the "Chosen Few" paid between \$8,000.00 and \$19,000.00 each, for the privilege...

The end result of all this was meant to be a BBC documentary on the "Effects of Climate Change on Antarctica", which would be screened jointly by the BBC and the ABC. Obviously advance publicity would boost audience viewing numbers, hence the presence of the Guardian and Fairfax reporters, who were supposed to provide a continuous supply of articles for the print and online versions of their respective newspapers.

How do we know all this? Because the ABC, the BBC, the Guardian and Fairfax were running stories on this "largest and most expensive Australian Antarctic Expedition ever", fully a month before it ever left. Only back then they were all "climate scientists", not "passengers" or "tourists".

According to JoNova, "This really has been a PR debacle of amazing proportions... Good scientists are distancing themselves from the publicity hungry climate lightweights and commentators on both sides of the fence are agreeing in their criticism."

This misinformation was despite the boat having BBC, and Guardian media on board, and Fairfax press in one of the rescue icebreakers. Today I see evidence of the first two effects.

According to SkyNews... Yves Frenot, director of the French Polar Institute, said he had no issue at all with rescuing those aboard the stricken vessel... [and] voiced fury at the misadventures of a Russian ship trapped in Antarctic ice, deriding what he called a tourists' trip that had diverted resources from real science... the trip itself was a 'pseudo-scientific expedition' that, because it had run into difficulties, had drained resources from the French, Chinese and Australian scientific missions in Antarctica...

The trip on the Akademik Shokalskiy was aimed at emulating a 1911-1914 expedition by the Australian explorer, Sir Douglas Mawson.

'This kind of commemorative expedition has no interest from a scientific point of view,' said Frenot. Because of the rescue operations, French scientists had had to scrap a two-week oceanographic campaign... 'The Chinese have had to cancel all their scientific programme, and my counterpart in Australia is spitting tacks with anger, because their entire summer has been wiped out.'

Because of the rescue operations, French scientists had had to scrap a two-week oceanographic campaign this month using the Astrolabe, Frenot said.

'The Chinese have had to cancel all their scientific program, and the counterparts in Australia are spitting tacks with anger, because their entire summer has been wiped out.'

Christopher Calwell in The Financial Times thinks this is a setback almost on par with ClimateGate, which tells us how oddly important this farce is, but also something depressing about how commentators judge scientific credibility. The sea-ice saga of the wannabee Mawsons is a PR disaster... ClimateGate was a scientific disaster unparalleled - we saw that the processes of science itself at the center of the debate were corrupted, and the leading scientists were displayed at their worst...

Given enough rope the poor intellectual standards, dismal ethics and lack of civic responsibility has inevitably exposed itself. But if the media had critiqued their irrational and self-serving behavior over the last decade, a lot of public money could have been used on things that mattered.

To top it off, now an American ice breaker, making a long detour from Australia, is headed to 'rescue' the original ship plus the rescue ship which are both locked in, well, ice 10-20 feet thick, that according to the warmists, should all have disappeared by now. How wrong they were. It extends out 50 miles further this century.

Source: UK Daily Telegraph

and

A Tale of Two Contests

By Barry, N0KV

A TALE OF TWO CONTESTS – OR “W.A.S. IN A WEEKEND”

This year, I decided to put in a fairly serious effort in both the December ARRL 160 meter CW and 10 meter SSB/CW contests and to do some analysis of the results. As a County Hunter, I always like to figure out what new counties (for what county hunter awards) I worked and enter those in the County Hunter logging program. I thought I'd publish the results in the hopes of motivating more county hunters to participate in more contests to improve their county hunting totals, and maybe work on other awards, such as DXCC.

General Results – ARRL 160M CW Contest.

The 160 meter CW contest occurred December 6-8, 2013. I entered as “hi power, assisted”. I worked 362 US QSO's in all 50 states, 24 Canadian QSO's, and 14 “other DX” QSO's for a total of 400 QSO's. In this contest, you work each station only once, so the number of QSO's is the same as the number of unique callsigns worked. The latter DX category included 12 countries – Portugal (CT) and France (F) in Europe, 2-Japanese (JA's) and Asiatic Russia(RA0FF), CE1/K7CA (Chile) in South America, East Kiribati (T32RC) in the Pacific Ocean, 5 Caribbean countries (C6 (Bahamas), KP2(US V.I.), FM(Martinique), PJ2, and ZF(Cayman Is.), and XE(Mexico). Only CE, CT, and UA0 were new 160 meter countries for me.

My station included a Yaesu FT-2000, an Alpha 9500 amplifier, a 66 ft base loaded vertical with 240 ft elevated radials used for transmitting, a new Antenna Solutions Shared Apex Loop Array for receiving, and N1MM logging software. The lower noise floor and the directivity offered by the new receive antenna certainly made it a lot easier to work some/most of this DX as well as some of the US stations.

County Hunter Specifics – 160M CW contest.

Worked 255 unique US counties, and all 50 states. Ninety-three of those counties were new 160M counties for me, and my new county total on 160M is now 581. Also worked 22 new 4th

time counties, six new Bingo III counties, 2 natural Bingos, a W prefix, and a new 1x2. Your mileage may vary. I worked the following county hunters in the 160 meter contest: K8MM, K5CM, AA3B, W9OP, and KO7X. Apologies if I overlooked anyone.

General Results – 10M SSB/CW contest.

The 10M contest occurred December 14-15, 2013, and I entered as “Mixed mode, hi power, assisted”. I had 1151 US QSO’s (with 1097 unique stations) in 48 states and 633 DX QSO’s for a total of 1784 QSO’s (1206 SSB/578 CW). 448 US QSO’s already confirmed on LOTW – only 2 weeks after the contest .

The US QSO’s worked from my QTH in Colorado were distributed by call area as follows: #1: 196, #2: 204, #3: 213, #4: 298, #5: 49, #6: 15, #7: 38, #8:45, #9:18, and #0: 55. The states worked the most frequently were New York(128 QSO’s), Pennsylvania (126 QSO’s), Florida (91 QSO’s), and Virginia (86 QSO’s). Taken together, the QSO’s with these 4 states represented 37% of the total US QSO’s. States closer to Colorado were worked a lot less frequently, and many appeared to be worked via back scatter propagation – often with the beam pointed toward Japan.

The 633 DX contacts included 160 contacts with Japanese stations, 103 contacts with Canadian stations, and 369 contacts with stations in 74 other countries. Didn’t quite get enough countries for DXCC in this contest, but not too bad if you were just getting started on DXCC - three quarters of the countries in less than 48 hrs. Unfortunately, none of these countries were new ones (even band countries) for me .

The equipment used was a Yaesu FT-2000, an Alpha 91B amplifier, a Mosley PRO-67 yagi, and N1MM logging software.

County Hunter Specifics – 10M SSB/CW contest.

Worked 448 unique counties/48 states in the contest. Didn’t work anyone in Kansas or Arkansas. If this is your first time counting 10 meter counties, you might expect that every 4 out of 10 QSO’s would be new 10 meter counties! Only 84 of those were new ones for me on 10 meters because I had worked this contest several times before. Two of those were last counties in the state on 10 meters. My 10 meter county total is now 1155. Also worked 26 new 4th time counties, 9 new Bingo III counties, and 6 natural Bingos. I worked the following 12 county hunters in the 10 meter contest: N7CW, AD1C, N1API, K1BV, WA4EEZ, K8MM, K0DEQ, KC3X, KA3QLF, K4YFH, K1HTV, and N8II

de N0KV

CW Stats to Dennis, KK7X – Last Call!

Now is the last minute to submit your year end totals for 2013 to Dennis. Now! No delay. He needs the info by the end of January.

Here's the link to the handy dandy form to submit your info

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1mupGOAuaT0UU0ziKZI0rcE-joLeDZjPBgXGtbwa_iOs/viewform

Here's the current listings of the cw ops (you don't have to be a whiz bang cw op to submit – you can track your yearly progress).

<http://countyhunter.com/CW%20STATS%202013.html>

Now is a good time to check the CW book on your Logger program and send in the data!

On the Road with N4CD III

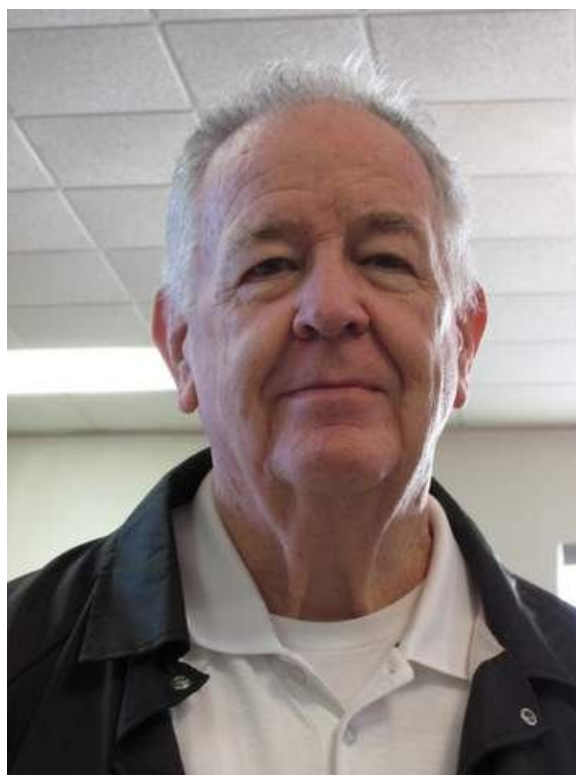
Every January, the Cowtown Hamfest is held in Fort Worth, TX. It's a two day affair starting on Friday afternoon and running all day Saturday – but like most in TX, it's essentially over by noon on Saturday. I had a few things to sell and if you get a table to sell stuff, you also get in early during 'set up' time to check out the other goodies for sale by other folks. Just takes a bit of money to spend on a table and having some 'junque' to sell. I still had some left over from buying 'too much stuff' at past auctions. So I headed on over there on Friday afternoon. Maybe a few county hunters would show up for it – usually one or two do.

On Friday, K5IID, Tom, USACA #661, dropped by for an eyeball. He lives in Hill County Texas not too far down the road from Ft. Worth (Tarrant County). Bob, KK5NA, had two tables full of boatanchors radios – lots of Heathkits and all sorts of other things. He's promising to get out mobile one of these months.



Tom, K5IID

On Saturday, Don, N5XG, USACA #934, stopped on by for an eyeball.. He mentioned he'll be making some trips to west TX and running those counties out and back.



Don, N5XG

I posted on the K3IMC forum I was headed there and looking out for other county hunters – maybe a 10am get together. Didn't run into any others – or at least they didn't say hi and I didn't recognize them. We set 10am on Saturday as a 'meeting time' but, alas, no one else showed up.

Jerry, K5YAA kidded on the K3IMC site: “Free Waffles at the N4CD table around 10? “. Nope – gave up waffles for a while unless 'on the road' and they come free with the motel Stayed overnight in Ft Worth at a Motel 6 – and no waffles. No breakfast either other than coffee – and they didn't even have any no-cal sweetener. Hmmmm. Worse, the food truck that normally provides breakfast goodies at the hamfest broke down and didn't show up. Breakfast was an apple. That's better for the waistline.

I sold a few things, sold one of the old wireless books, 3 telegraph sounders, one J-38 type key, a Simpson 260 VOM, and an old Heath HP-23 power supply. I bought just one thing for \$5 and that was it – a lot more 'stuff' went out that came back in!

There were maybe 100 people selling things, a few folks in the 'outdoor flea market area' (you never know with our weather – one year it rains, the next year like this year it was 68 degrees and sunny – beautiful weather – if there will even be an outdoor flea market.) Probably 500-700 come through looking to buy any thing that catches their eye. It's not Dayton, but you never know what will show up. No regens – not a one. There were a half dozen Heathkits,

some Hallicrafters stuff, a half dozen Radio Shack SWL receivers, VHF/UHF radios – 2M stuff, but very little 'rare' stuff. An SB-221 amp sold for \$550. A DX-60 and matching VFO sold, and a few folks were carrying around goodies they had bought on other tables. Lots of small parts traded hands. Nothing tugged at my heart and said 'take me home!'.

By noon it was over and it was time to get some food, so I packed up the remaining stuff, hauled it out to the car, and headed out. Grabbed a chicken wrap at The Health Store – a giant super market type pharmacy with row after row of 'health foods', pills, supplements, minerals, aids, and you name it. If you want flax seed oil, cod liver oil, vitamin anything pills, they got 'em. Stuff you never heard about. I had some time to kill so I looked around, and then enjoyed the sandwich.

At 1:30 I stopped by the Vintage Radio and Phono Society monthly meeting – with a small flea market of about 10 folks – then meeting at 2pm, and later headed on home by 5pm. The VPRS is a local group of several hundred into antique radios from the 1900 era up to about 50 years ago. They hold a big annual convention each year in November with big auctions of hundreds of radios.

Time for more county hunting trips.

Greenie Energy Winter Fail

German power suppliers are in frenzy. Why? In December, Germany's cold, windless, overcast winter returned. Result: "Germany's wind and solar power production was consistently near nonexistent. More than 23,000 German wind turbines stood still for days. One million photovoltaic systems, subsidized by consumers to the tune of 108 billion Euros, stopped work nearly completely and delivered a few kilowatts briefly during lunch. For the whole week, coal, nuclear and gas plants generated an estimated 95 percent of Germany's electricity supply." (Dec. 24 – Die Welt)

Coal is correcting Germany's renewable mistake, with 23 new coal plants coming. Spain was first to see its renewables blunder, but the coal revival fever swells Europe-wide.

Never mentioned in the rush to win billions in renewable subsidies, is that wind and solar require backup from coal, gas or nuclear plants; meaning duplicate power-generating systems without which electrical blackouts are guaranteed. Is this Washington's Renewable Electrical Standard's path?

Initiative 937 (2006) mandates 15 percent of US electricity will be from renewable sources. Is Washington prepared for when renewable power fails for a week, like Germany's? Was I-937 a mistake? You will know when the lights go out.

Source: <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2014/jan/18/coal-bails-out-renewables/>

On the Road with N4CD IV

The weatherman promised a nice weekend. It's been chilly here in TX (down right cold!) for the past couple weeks, with only a short break here and there. The northern part of the country has been shivering with Jerry seeing 20 and 30 below zero and not many days above zero and not much where the snow melts. Chicago hasn't been much better and NYC and north got clobbered by even more snow. South TX got some ice – Ron, N5MLP, had some ice coating the roads (not much but enough) in the Houston area- they showed folks slipping around on the roads. That went south of me. Next Tuesday they are going to get a 'wintry mix'. Yuk. The moisture is down along the coast and the cold front is headed all the way down there. Chicago won't get above zero on Tuesday and Jerry, W0GXQ might have a high of 7 below. Yuk Yuk Yuk!

So when the forecast was for high 60s and 70s for the weekend, I could hear those counties calling my name. Stonewall was on the 'most needed' at the top of the list and it's a couple hundred miles to the west. I could also hit some of the other needs in the same neck of the woods on a weekend trip.

Hollis, needed a few for Mobile Diamond, and Joyce needed Stonewall for MD. She's got the base rig/antenna going at the FL QTH now. I'd get to Stonewall, then figure out what to do next. The plan was to be home by Sunday dinner time or sooner so I had to figure out where to loop back and find a motel. Some towns.counties have really crappy motels if they have any at all. Others have nice motels or a choice - from Motel 6 to Hilton Hotels.

So, sort of at the last minute I put a note on the K3IMC forum, they headed out after the Saturday morning local ham 'late breakfast' get together at 6:30 am or so (food at 7).....and was on the road a bit after 8:20 headed west. The route was out on highway 380. That will take you all the way to NM if you want to go that far – and take most of the day to get there. It's through Denton, Wise, Jack, Young, Throckmorton, Haskell, – on good roads with 60-70 mph speed limits. Further out it's 75 mph speed limits and you can zip along quickly. Well, a

couple hours later (3 1/2) I was in Stonewall – and a whole bunch of people needed that. I was running 20, 17, 30 and 40 cw. And running on 20M SSB – off frequency since James was busy running mobiles of net frequency. Kerry, W4SIG, was on in MS putting them out. Lowell, KB0BA and Sandra, N0XYL ran a few. KB9AIT put out a couple on SSB. N9AC was on in FL in a couple - CW. Dave, KW1DX was on in MA, ran on SSB and CW. That was the activity for the day.

The weather was great. It started out at 33 degrees in the morning at the QTH and quickly warmed to the 50s, and then up to 68 by late afternoon! That's real nice weather in Jan but not 'record setting' by any measure. We've had lots of highs in the 30s and 40s this year in Jan, and a few days where it didn't make it out of the 20s. I had the windows down on a few county line stops! The further west you get, the less there is population wise. I don't even think there is a gas station in King County these days – don't plan on it. There are a few towns along the way – some a couple thousand folks, some 300 folks. Some 50 folks and just a bump in the road. There's not great 'data coverage' in a lot of the counties, but half decent voice coverage in most of the counties on the major roads. It seems there are more and more power lines along the former empty main roads. Civilization is moving in. Same for some low QRN as you zip along. Oh well. Still wasn't that much of a problem.



N4CD Stonewall TX
Genuine Percy Pic

After working through the Stonewall pileups (one of the last ones for Ron, N5MLP), giving out 2 last counties, and working the DX, it was then north to King (not even a gas station there) then went to Dickens then headed south to find a motel along the interstate. Down the Scurry to Route 84. That whacks the corner of the 3 corners and you can put out 3 counties within a

1/2 mile on the main road. You can actually find a '4 way' line if you want to go off on some dirt roads – but MARAC rules don't allow you to run 4 at once...and you'd sit in the middle of a road intersection – although there is no traffic (Murphy would likely decide that the one or two vehicles a day using that road would decide to come when you were parked there – hi hi). I decide to run Fisher at a different point.

The DX was in on the weekend – SM7ZDI, DL6KVA, DL3GA, DL5ME, DL3IAC, LY5A, ON4AAC, JH7VHZ, YV5OIE. Good to have them make it through. LY5A had big echoes on his signal. Sounded like 3 people sending at once - hi hi. There's lots of windmills in this part of TX. They were busy putting out the megawatts of power.

I wound up getting a motel in Sweetwater, TX (Nolan County) right on I-20. It was a former Motel 6 – now a Budget Inn. \$39.95 plus tax coming out to \$46. Room was OK but nothing to write home about. It was the ten year old style of Motel 6 – with the 'round' shower. All the doors on the outside. Could have been an old old Holiday Inn 30 years ago. Everything worked. TV worked. Heater worked and was a newer unit. You can also pick a La Quinta Inn, Holiday Inn Express and another 'budget type' motel there in town. Half a dozen restaurants to choose from there, too. It's a decent size town. No waffle for breakfast. Just coffee if you want it.

After securing a motel room, I headed over to the nearby line of Fisher/Nolan on 70. Usually good line to run – today had a bit of QRN on 40M but other bands not bad. Ran that then headed back to motel by about 5pm, then after taking out radio, headed to the Great Wall Buffet nearby to load up on veggies. The runs could take more than half an hour including going to 20 SSB.

I'm working on the 'bulge' part of having indulged too much in those breakfast waffles. So at the Great Wall buffet dinner was a giant plate of broccoli and green beans. A small (like 2inch by 2inch piece of salmon) chunk of salmon, half a dozen shrimp to go with the broccoli, a pile of mushrooms (goes good with broccoli). Second plate was a bit more broccoli (you can eat a ton of it and it has next to no calories and is super good for you)....and a big load of fresh fruit. (no canned stuff). Didn't have much else for a 'salad bar'. Well, I ate the fortune cookie (35 calories for the tiny thing and no nutritional value other than 'carbs and sugar' !) and chased it down with a half glass of water and that was dinner. \$12 for the 'weekend' buffet where they had crab legs if you wanted them. Filled up car on the way back to motel. 422 miles the first day. Sunset is about 6:30 out here but the cloud cover had moved in with low ceiling. It got dark quicker than normal.

Running on 20M SSAB was nice. You work a few people who haven't been converted to CW ops yet. AC0CU, W3CR, KB9VYT, N0XYL, N5MLP, VE5EGK, WD9EJK, AA9JJ/N9QPQ, NA8W, K4HVB, VE2MAM, W8WKP among them. Caught some of them on 17M SSB, too!

I killed some time watching the TV, then turned in early. Slept well. Next morning at 6am I

wandered up to the MacD. There wasn't anything else open in that town on Sunday morning other than fast food places. Half a dozen police cars were in the lot, so it must be 'the place' to be. Had an egg white McMuffin (280 calories and \$2.99) and two cups of coffee (senior discount – 39c). The sun comes up at 7:40am this time in TX out here, so no need to rush. It was less than 15 minutes over to the same county line as I ran yesterday. Seems a few folks missed it, so I'd start there. In the winter, you can be 'too early' with no propagation to the east or west coast other than 30 and 40M.

I hit Fisher/Nolan just a bit after sunrise (7:40 am). It was 43 degrees. Ran that line again for Hollis, KC3X and Vic, SM7ZDI and others who missed it Sat evening. Then it was 'two by two' headed east – county line pairs you can run with detours off the interstate. An hour east you can hit Taylor/Jones, then another 10-15 miles you can hit Shackelford/Callahan (good spot of 604). Gary, K4EXT needed the Callahan sign. Dunno why I never took it before since I've been at that county line at least a half dozen times. Probably one reason is I usually am headed west when I run it and stop at the Shackelford sign on the opposite side of the road – and Shackelford is the 'rarer' county. Callahan is on the interstate! Oh well. Got the pic and it's off to K4EXT to add to the database for TX. That was the only 'new' one on the trip.



N4CD Shackelford/Callahan, TX
For the Database
Genuine Percy Pic
Lots of Windmills here!

After a nice run, I headed to the next line at just north of Ranger TX - you see what used to be one of the richest towns in TX. Now it is a sorry case. A lot of buildings were simply abandoned. It was oil that made this town.....and when the easy oil ran out, and the price of oil was too low to justify continuing to pump the dwindling resources – the town just 'moved on' People left. The downtown is full of abandoned buildings boarded up. Old houses falling down. The oil wells are now being reworked and pumping a bit – and pumping some money into the pockets of those who own the oil rights (usually not living there any longer). There's a 'college' there – but other than a big Love's gas station – there's not much reason to head there these days. I stopped at the Love's and bought a container of veggies for lunch - \$2.50..That container of veggies and an apple that was sitting on the back seat from the last trip. They keep forever if cool. Most of the apples sold in stores are 12-18 months old.

About five miles north of town on 717 is the county line of Stephens/ Eastland. I sat with the windows down at 70 deg. Wowie! Doesn't get any better in January in TX for county hunting. Ran on 17M SSB as well in a few counties on Sunday. Why not? I had time to spare getting home and I was enjoying being out in the nice weather. It's back to the 'deep freeze' on Monday for another week or more of Siberian Express (that Polar Vortex overflow). The county hunting car will sit in the garage for a while.

The DX pile up started on Sunday. Someone said it was an FT5ZM on some rare place. - Nr 5 most needed country. The pile ups were out of control extending more than 20 KHz on cw. Not good. It's supposed to be there for a while, so I guess we'll just have to move up to 18102 or 18112 and higher on 30M to 10129 or so. There was good cell data coverage so I could spot myself easily. Since I stopped to run the counties, no problem doing it either! Hi hi. I'm not doing to do that while zipping along the highway!

A bit further east you can run Palo Pinto/Erath. Very short detour off the Interstate - 500 feet – but you'll sit for 20-30 minutes running the bands. No problem. From there it's a straight shot home with only single counties to be run – Parker, Tarrant (not spotted) then into the Metroplex with too much traffic and noise to run for another 60 miles to get on home. Back home at 3:30 or so...time to do the laundry on a warm day – best time – saves energy. It's been piling up.

No deer seen – good . While stopped at the Shackelford/Callahan line, two friendly dogs came up and wanted to be petted...took care of that.....watched while the wind turbines spun away there.....and the cows were contented across the street munching away.

So – when nature hands you a great weekend – go county hunting. It wasn't so great up north – but they had a 'warmer spell' from the deep freeze, and that 'deep freeze' is going to slam them again on Monday and Tuesday. (7 below MN and 4 below Chicago for highs!) We'll be

joining them with 30s type temps here. I see the QSO Party season starts next weekend with 3 QSO parties scheduled for next weekend! The fun begins. Vermont, Delaware (someone run Sussex please) and Minnesota. I can promise you it will be COLD COLD COLD in MN this year! Hopefully there will be clear skies, no precipitation and decent driving for the folks. Make sure you spot them and work 'em. Keep 'em busy for all the miles/gas they go through to make it fun for all! Many years no one runs in the 3 Delaware counties. You can do that in less than 2 hours! If you stop and run, maybe 3 hours total!

Hope I ran something you needed! Stonewall should be off the 'most needed' list now.

Stats: 703 miles, 29.6 mpg (too many stops with engine running and 75mph speeds), 24 counties put out.

Awards Issued

USACA #1242	OE5KE, Adolph	Jan 17, 2014
Fifth time #113	AB4YZ, Ray	Jan 2, 2014
Master Gold #60	KC1NA, Bob	Nov 29, 2013
USA-PA #5	WQ7A, Terry	Jan 6, 2014

Events for County Hunters

Feb 1 - 2

Vermont QSO Party

0000Z, Feb 1 to 2400Z, Feb 2

<http://www.ranv.org/vtqso.html>

Minnesota QSO Party

1400Z-2400Z, Feb 1

http://www.w0aa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=7

Delaware QSO Party

1700Z, Feb 1 to 2359Z, Feb 2

<http://fsarc.org/qsoparty/qsohome.htm>

Feb 8

New Hampshire QSO Party

1600Z, Feb 8 to 2200Z, Feb 9

www.w1wqm.org/nhqso/NEW_HAMPSHIRE_QSO_PARTY_RULES.pdf

Feb 23

North Carolina QSO Party

1500Z, Feb 23 to 0059Z, Feb 24

<http://rars.org/ncqsoparty/>

Other Contests

10-10 Int. Winter Contest, SSB 0001Z, Feb 1 to 2359Z, Feb 2

<http://www.ten-ten.org/calendar.html>

<http://www.ten-ten.org/Forms/QSO%20Party%20Rules.pdf>

See ARRL Contest Corral at:

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Contest%20Corral/Contest%20Corral%201402.pdf>

for other contests happening during the month – RTTY, DX, SKCC, etc

and

WA7BNM site : <http://hornucopia.com/contestcal/weeklycont.php>

Michigan Mini

The 2013 Michigan Mini was hosted by Ed, K8ZZ and Joe, W8TVT and was held at the Holiday Inn West Bay in Traverse City, Michigan with room rates of: \$85.95 plus tax per night if reserved by March 24th, 2014.

Date for 2014 MICHIGAN MINI is April 24 – 25 & 26th..

<http://michiganmini.superhosts.net/>

Dayton Hamvention

The Dayton Hamvention will be held May 16th-18th this year. Likely we have a County Hunter Forum on Friday afternoon with dinner afterward at the Golden Corral. Stay tuned for further details.

That's all Folks! See you next month!