

County Hunter News

March 1, 2017
Volume 13 Issue 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

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

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

find information on these awards and the rules at:

http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at:

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

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

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

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

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

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

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

Notes from the Editor

1) N4CD Rumblings - ARRL

A poster on the K3IMC forum noted, as we announced last month, that the annual dues for the American Relay Radio League had increased to \$49/yr. That's less than a buck a week and certainly not out of the 'budget' of most hams. What do you get for your annual dues? He couldn't justify that 'expense'. He'd rather freeload – like those who watch their favorite programs on PBS and don't contribute a dime to support their local stations.

First, you get QST Magazine – the premier monthly magazine that is chock full of technical items, ham radio stories, latest updates to DXCC standings, ARRL contest results, section traffic reports, latest propagation reports and stories, technical reviews of new ham radio equipment with verified specs – tested in the ARRL labs, and a lot more. The 'competitor magazine – CQ- which is more oriented to DX – is \$36/yr and that is all you get for your \$36.

Second, with the ARRL, you get the ONLY organization that fights to protect (and increase) your amateur frequency bands. There are hundreds of interested parties out there with BILLIONS of dollars salivating over the ham allocations. Most foreign countries could care less about 'ham radio operation' and would do away with it in a heartbeat as they see private ownership of 'transmitters' a security risk and the ability to raise billions in quick revenues to increase spending. Right now in Mexico, for example, there is a one year 'hold' on issuing new ham radio licenses that has gone on for several years. Other countries simply do not issue ham radio licenses. Europe has smaller ham bands than the US.

Recently the TV spectrum was 'repacked'. The government took in tens of BILLIONS of dollars selling off 'channels' that they confiscated from the TV broadcasters. We've had to fight to keep the 420-450 band and above. Not too many years ago, the commercial interests managed to take 60% of the amateur 220-225 band, leaving us 2 MHz out of our original five. Each year, groups want to 'share' our ham bands with space located 'radars', robotic control systems with wideband TV links, and the like – which would mean total pollution of the ham bands in most urban areas.

When you wake up in the morning and turn on the radio and hunt for counties or DX on the WARC bands, be thankful the ARRL and other international groups were able to come together to get the ham allocations there. 30M is a fantastic county hunting band. It wouldn't be there if it weren't for the ARRL – supported by member dues. 17 and 12m were great not too long ago, and at least one county hunter worked all counties on 17M already!

The ARRL is currently fighting to INCREASE our ham bands – perhaps we'll get another 15 KHz at 60m band – 5 MHz. Then we could do some serious county hunting there. Right now all we have is five 'channels'. They are looking at an allocation at 500 KHz and a better one at 137 KHz.

They are fighting to fend off homeowner association restrictions on antennas and have won partial victories in some of the states and are working to get bills through congress. It's tough today if you buy a new house to put up ANY antenna without hassles.

No other US organization represents the US interests in Congress and abroad. So your dues go to support this activity. Remember, when you turn your radios to the WARC bands, say thanks to the ARRL.

Third, if you're a DX'er, you've probably used the Outgoing and Incoming QSL bureaus. Outgoing, the ARRL handles all the cards (hundreds of thousands a year) and sends them on to the foreign country's bureaus. With a large number of volunteers, the ARRL system of incoming cards functions well. You get your foreign QSL cards for a nickel a card, vs \$3 or \$4 or more sending them direct.

Then, of course, there's operating events like the ARRL contests – with results compiled, the ARRL Awards system with WAS, DXCC and Honor Roll, and more. There was the ARRL Centennial Event – the on-going Triple Play award – 160m contests, 10m contests, VHF contests – something for everyone.

We should mention all the ARRL publications – from the well respected 'bible' – the ARRL Handbook, to the various books on antennas, satellite operation, QRP, interference resolution, QEX, and a dozen more. How many do you or have you had during your ham career? Did you get started listening to W1AW code practice way back when?

Other publications have come and gone. 73 Magazine. Ham Radio Magazine. Radio Magazine. WorldRadio. VHF. Popular Electronics. All gone.

Yes, there are some 'diehards' – some still mad from the days of 'incentive licensing'. I too was affected having gotten my General License in 1963. That gave me 'full privileges' and I could operate anywhere in the ham bands. Not long after, incentive licensing went into effect, and by golly, I lost the bottom 25 KHz of the CW bands and part of 20M, 40 and 80M SSB bands. OK.....first step was study up a bit and get the Advanced. Had to make a special trip into NYC for that at Thanksgiving break from college. That brought back most but not the lower 25 KHz reserved for Extras. It took me five years to get my speed up to 20 wpm and pass the Extra – back then you had to code tests, too! And had to take your exams at the FCC office in person. This time in downtown Chicago with time off from work. OK...so I upgraded and got my total bands back.

Now – heck – no CW tests and a lot fewer license classes. Has that worked?

Another part of the ARRL is recruiting new hams in this difficult era of 'instant

communications'. Fifty and 80 years ago, there was no coast to coast telephone calls from your handheld unit. Long distance calls cost you dollars per minute from your landline and you made few of them before 1975 when long distance competition finally started. Now, your \$25 cellphone can talk across the country for pennies a minute. Radio communications is no longer 'gee whiz'. So how to you sell today's youth on ham radio?

Did I mention licensing manuals, too? They've been around for 70 or 80 years I think. We all studied from them, and they are still as good as gold for getting ready for the tests.

The ARRL has a major youth recruitment effort – through schools and setting up school clubs and equipment – from pushing emergency communications and digital technology to today's youth, and keeping 'fun' as part of the equation. Has it worked? Yes, in the past 10 years, the amateur community is at ALL TIME highs with over 750,000 licensed hams. My local clubs are at all time highs in membership as well. Your dues money goes to support the youth effort of the ARRL. Without growth, ham radio becomes stagnant, then obsolete – then history as others want our frequencies.

So think long and hard before you whine about 'no code hams' (hams of today are quickly assimilated into the ham bands with minimal problems), or the 'injustice' of incentive licensing back 50 years ago, and be thankful there's an organization looking out for your interests. I hope that all of you will support the ARRL by joining and helping all their efforts.

2) Propagation – or lack of it

We're heading down in the sunspot cycle and it's obvious. 20M opens later and closes earlier. Skip tends to be long. 15M is pretty much dead and skip is 'long' if it is open to somewhere, usually not the US. 10M barely squeaks open on rare occasion. 30M is still nice for county hunting and 40M is getting more and more use. The 'flux' and sunspot numbers continue to drop and likely will for another year or two. We've got to take what we get and use the best bands/modes to keep making contacts.

3) MARAC CW Contest Coordinator

After doing the CW contest for years and years, Norm has passed the torch to Greg, NM2L, who will be doing the CW contests from now on.

MARAC Rules Change – Self Credit

Subject: MARAC Awards Committee News Release - Awards Changes - 2/15/2017

Message: At the quarterly meeting of the MARAC Board of Directors on 2/15/2017, thirteen changes to existing awards were approved to go into effect on Thursday, 2/16/2017. These changes are intended to provide incentive to mobile/portable operators to go mobile/portable and put out more counties for the benefit of all county hunters.

Mobile/portable operators who transmit at least one valid contact on an HF band may now receive credit they are eligible to give to other county hunters for their own needs in that county. The fourteen awards affected include the following:

- 1) Worked All USA Counties Award (2nd time to Nth time)
- 2) USA-CW Award
- 3) USA SSB Award
- 4) USA - Digital Award
- 5) YL/OM Team Award
- 6) YL Award
- 7) Five Star Award
- 8) Star XX (Twenty Star Award)
- 9) Single Band Award
- 10) USA Prefix Award (USA-PA)
- 11) USA – Call Sign Combo Award
- 12) Bingo and Bingo N
- 13) Bingo - Natural Bingo Award
- 14) Bingo Cinco Award

There are some specific limitations on certain award changes that will be reflected in the actual award rules update which should be available on the MARAC website by Friday, 2/17.

Issued by the MARAC Awards Committee – February 15, 2017

Ron Clift – N5MLP - MARAC Awards Manager

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Note: Updated by N4CD to include Bingo, Bingo N

Mobile Activity Report

At the end of January

Peter, N4UP was running counties in NC and WV

DAve, KW1DX was spotted down in FL putting them out

Ron, KB6UF was up in TN then into MS and AL

Kerry, W4SIG was putting them out in TN

Gerry, AE7KI was noted in KY

Steve, AK8A was on his way south to TX

Mark, N2MH ran a few in NJ

Jack, KC7YE headed from CA back north

Fred, K0FG spotted in FL

In February

Jim, N9JF spotted in IL giving out State Parks

Bob, K7TM spotted in AZ

Jim, N4JT put out NC counties into VA for five mode QSOs

Ray, WB0PYF started his trip from MO to FL

John, K4BAI, headed from GA to FL for the HamCation - and back.

Jerry, W0GXQ, took a trip around northwestern MN

Matt, W0NAC and Sharon N0LXJ, ran counties in CO on five modes

Ed, K8ZZ, was busy several days running KS counties

KZ2P/N2FPM were giving out SC counties. Later in the month, running counties in GA.

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Doug, WA4UNS, headed through to AR. And back. When home, put out some counties in the NC QP.

He noted on the K3IMC forum:

“While it is true that I only need ONE contact in a county to count towards my Master Gold 1500 total... it would be nice to work more than one station. Hey gang, I'm out there trying to run counties for everyone, spending my gas money, and annoying my wife (she wears earplugs when I run counties).

I really appreciate a net control but understand that not everyone thinks they could be an NCS. Not a problem. However, if you are using Logger AND use Logger's connection to spotting sites for needs alerts... that means you ARE connected to the Internet. Is it too much trouble to ask that you spot me??? Please???? (Remember, I don't own a Smartphone therefore can NOT spot myself... I've explained this fact before). Then I might get some 40M contacts after running 20M. If I call on 40M and get NO calls for a minimum of two counties... I abandon 40M for the remainder of the trip that day. So, it's possible someone close in might be missing on counties.

On my return trip... (2/19) I got NO contacts for Woodruff, AR... therefore... can not

count it towards my attempt to transmit from 1000 different counties. I probably will not be in Woodruff again any time soon. After no contacts in Woodruff or Crittenden (I got ONE contact with a non-county hunter in Cross, AR)... I shut down when I crossed into TN heading for Jackson, TN (MADISON). The next day (2/20)... I made the conscious decision to NOT run any counties (from MADISON to JOHNSON, TN). I preferred to talk Amphibians with my XYL. No apologies folks!!!

BTW... I purposely did NOT list the counties I intended on running in Planned Trips. I noted the routes I would travel to see if all y'all still might know how to read a Rand-McNally map and figure out the counties I would be going through. IF I finish MG... great... otherwise... oh well. Sorry... I starting to re-evaluate future running.

Folks... I would rather contact COUNTY HUNTERS for any award credit. But I CAN and MAY stay away from CH frequencies and see who I might be able to work. I prefer to give my LCs to CHers.”

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Kraig, KA2LHO, has been busy many days putting out parks and counties in FL.

Ray, WB0PYF, spotted in FL then headed north to home. Ran all the counties along the way on CW.

Jim, N9JF, spotted in IA

Karl, K4YT, ran counties in VA

N9MM ran a few parks in TX – and the counties

Fred, K0FG, left FL. Wound up in TX

During the ARRL DX test, you had a few HI stations to work. Didn't see any AK spotted – tough to work them with the sunspot cycle and higher A indexes.

One day no mobiles were spotted – just two parks on the air – but they are in counties. Kraig, KA2LHO, did a lot of work to develop a spreadsheet that shows every park in the USA and what counties they are in. So work the parks! Give those folks a contact and get a county! Some are mobile, some are portable. Count likely for 'no-star' too.

Jim, N4JT, active in VA

Ron, N5MLP, was busy putting out counties in TX and AR into MO and LA.

N4UP was circling around in SC getting them on the air.

W8OP active in WV putting out counties on a couple trips.

WA3QNT cleaned up some needs in PA with a nice trip.

N4UP, N4CW, K3TD were out mobile in SC QP. WW4SF was busy too.

N0KV/N0DXE were down in NM running counties

KZ2P/N2FPM noted out in SC/GA.

End date 2/28

Montana QSO Party

The Montana QSO Party took place the end of the January. There were a few stations on the air but not many. KS7T was spotted multiple times and I heard one or two others. That's a little bit disappointing since I regularly worked five or six in the NPOTA year long event. Of course, no mobiles were out running in the middle of winter in MT.

From the 3830 contest reflector

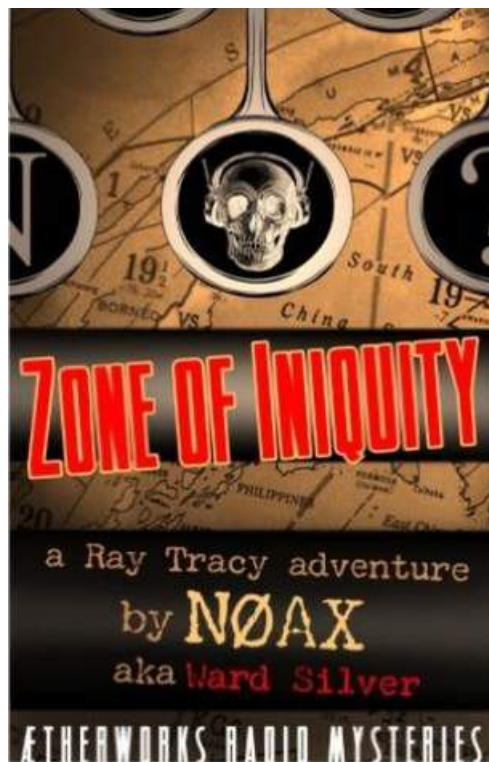
N7FLT reported 667 SSB QSOs

John, K4BAI in GA, worked 3 stations on cw and 1 on SSB – all 20m

Ed, KN4Y, caught 2 on cw.

Book Review of the Month

Zone of Inequity – by Ward Silver N0AX



Zone of Inequity is a new thriller story of the disappearance of a prominent world-reknown DX'er, Fred Dunston, father of two, Big Gun on twenty meters, and a perennial call on the Honor Roll listings. Suddenly nowhere to be seen and missed the C7A expedition. Enter Ray Tracey, private investigator. Hired by Libby Dunston, he now starts on the search for the missing man. The only possible clue found at the home of the missing man is a typewriter ribbon – which Ray manages, via a friend, to decode.

Seems the missing man copied all his QSOs on the mill(typewrite) – leaving a record, if it can be deciphered. Lots of strange short QSOs at unusual times with the names Vinny and Pang showing up.

Turns out Ray finds there's some strange goings on with messages about 'shipments' – and he finds the missing man took a very strange itinerary to join to latest DX'pedition via a couple of Asian cities nowhere near the best route to get to his destination. Dunnston was involved with a foreign company as it's US representative.

Ray heads off to Pacific, to the HQ of the firm Dunston worked for, trying to decipher the clues on the ribbon, plus the travel itinerary. Seems he has a travel agent friend able to track previous flights and routes and people which comes in handy. Some of the other DX'ers on the expedition also seem to have unusual travel patterns. Ray goes undercover and stealth to find out what is going on.

Lots of intrigue and mystery solving in a fast paced story. Lots of danger for Ray as he finds that he's involved with an international smuggling deal and Dunnston's job was really a front for an ancient art and artifacts crime ring. They used the shipping of the equipment from DX'peditions on the return visit as a way to smuggle in a few extra boxes of very valuable figurines and statues – where things usually passed through customs without thorough searches. Dunston was a partner in this crime family.

With a twist ending, it will leave you thoroughly entertained. Good read.

Available on the ARRL web site under books or on Amazon.

On the Road with N4CD I

Toward the end of January, the weather was good- no rain, clear skies and temps in the 50s and 60s during the day. Why not take a two day trip headed east to run counties and State Parks for WWFF? I needed a few counties out that way for Double Diamond and perhaps one of the Mobile Diamond holders would be around. There were also a few I needed to run for third time transmit. Looking at the spots, it seemed there wasn't a plethora of mobile activity either – so I could help in that department.

After a quick breakfast at home, I headed out on Saturday Jan 28 headed to Lake Tawakoni State Park in Hunt County. Ran through Rockwall but not too many takers early in the morning. Lake Tawakoni is a man made reservoir of 37,000 acres created in 1960. You can find abundant wildlife there including alligators in some parts which are swampy. In 2007, entomologists from around the country flocked here to see a 200 yard long spiderweb! It lies in 3 counties...but the State Park is in Hunt. It's one of the units of the World Wide Flora and Fauna list – KFF-3031. Some National Park hunters/activators are now into this.

AK8A would be heading south to the tip of TX for some nice warm weather this weekend. Ron, KB6UF was over in MS headed for home, and N9JF was spotted in IL. He would run two parks over the weekend. AE7KI ran a few in KY. A few other parks would be spotted over the weekend as well – W0CD, N9JF, and KA2ESK. Parks are in counties!

In an hour and a half, 71 QSOs went into the log. Conditions were so so – and a few Europeans made it through in the morning hours. After I did 20/30/40cw and 20SSB, it was time to leave and head through the next through Rains. A index at 21 - yuck!

I caught Terry, WQ7A for the Double Diamond contact. This is one of 4 current awards where you can get credit yourself for the county you are in – by working qualified contacts – often on multiple bands – and working someone who has the qualifying award as well. WQ7A has Mobile Diamond, so that gives me Double Diamond credit for Rains. At the moment, there are 3 Mobile Diamond holders active, one SK, and one inactive. Bob, N8KIE, is in HI and not on much – so it's Gene, K5GE or Terry, WQ7A, if they are around. The other awards that give you 'self credit' are Master Gold, Master Platinum, Mobile Diamond and Five Mode.. We could use a few more higher level award holders! The reason for doing this is that – well, first to stimulate activity – but more so reward the few with the higher level awards to go out and run the counties – which often require transmitting from 500 plus individual counties – to get the county themselves. Otherwise, the other award holders would benefit, but who would want to go out and give the other few the next award and miss out yourself? It's worked out well for Master Platinum, Mobile Diamond, and will hopefully work out for Double Diamond. For the digital folks, the same applies to the new Five Mode Award – you can get credit for working people from the county on five digital modes.

After Rains County, it was up to Cooper Lake State Park. This has two separate parks....one in Hunt County, one in Delta. Well, folks likely needed Delta so it was off the the 'north' one. KFF-3000. Winter Field Day would start soon – that might be

good for a few contacts, or might get the band full of QRM. We'd see. Ran the bands and did 75 QSOs from there.

To get credit for an activation, you need to make at least 10 QSOs. To have an official activation for the park itself, more than 44 contacts need to be made from the park. Then it gets listed as 'activated'. You can do, say, 20 one day, and go back and do 25 the next time, and you then get credit for an activation. The county hunter contacts go a long way to help break the magic 44 number.

There was still time, but I wasn't pushing it. It's still winter time with short daylight hours. The further east you go in the time zone, the sooner the sunset arrives. However, there was time for one more park so it was over to Lake Bob Sandlin State Park, KFF-3023 in Titus County. I started on 20m SSB and caught a few of the Winter Field Day stations. The temps were in the 60s....so I had the windows open, the heat off, and ran category 1 -'O' NTX. That's 'outdoor station' in unheated car, van, tent, or on picnic table. The sun was blasting down so I was warm in my ski jacket – hi hi. Ran the bands. I barely barely had internet access from there – it would come and go. Fortunately it held up. Otherwise, these days on the CHN , no one is listening. 20M SSB, cw frequencies – 'no one home'.....you can call for 15 minutes without a response unless folks know you are on a big trip and waiting for you. Just managed 45 contacts – just squeaking by the limit. Some hunting for Winter Field day stations and a special event station like VE100MY/VE4 did the trick. Barely! Whew!



N9JF was out putting out a park this weekend for a few hours. Also winter field day.

That evening I headed into Mt. Pleasant for a Days Inn - \$37 plus tax, bringing it to \$43. I was about 130 miles from home – could have driven home then back out east again, but between gas and tolls and wear and tear, it was less hassle to stay out 'east' a bit. Motel price was reasonable. Night comes early this time of year, still. It's a big motel (80 rooms) – 3 stories but got an outside entry room. There aren't too many places for dinner at this location – fast food or a very popular Mexican place – Two Senoritas. Headed out before 4:45. It was packed – and even has a separate 'smoking wing'. They honor 'lunch prices' up to 5pm and the portion was generous. You'd be stuffed with the dinner size ones. Good food and good prices. Back to the motel. The sun went down at 5:35 with a nice sunset, but darn early. It must be really bad in western TN when the sun is down at 4:15pm this time of year. Well, that's one reason the N4CD mobile hasn't wandered too far in the short daylight hour months.

Slept well that night.

Next morning I had their breakfast but skipped the waffle. There were all sorts of Danishes and other fattening stuff to tempt one. Trying to lose a few pounds. Just a small bowl of cereal and a cut up small apple, coffee and small juice. Then it was off to the first park – Daingerfield State Park KFF3004 in Morris County TX. The A index had dropped to single digits...but the flux was down in the low 70s. We're headed down in the sunspot cycle.

I managed to get 52 QSOs from here. Worked a few more Winter Field Day stations to get over 44. Thanks to the CH for the contacts as well but not all that many around. KW1DX was mobile down in FL. I caught some 1x1s showing up too....no idea what their counties are but it was on SSB, and am working on 'all cw' N th time. Of all the contacts, only 4 county hunter contacts were in the log! I dunno! Were the county hunters sleeping in on a Sunday morning? Maybe no one needed Morris – on the interstate but only for a few miles? I've run it half a dozen times recently. Oh well.

Then it was heading back east through Camp and Upshur, Wood (didn't get DD there), to Smith County and Tyler State Park. Since I spent the money for an annual state park pass (\$70), I figured I better use it a lot. Most of the parks on this trip were \$5 to \$7 entry fee – I've just about recouped my \$70 so it will be all gravy from here on out for the year. The 'senior pass' gets you and a car load in for half price and is good forever. If I keep playing at WWFF, maybe I'll do that next when I run out of close by parks to

visit.

Well, did over 70Q and the county hunters showed up – which helps a lot. Got my 44+ and left after 1 1/2 hours to head southeast to the next one.

Purtis State Park is in Henderson County. Small lake there. The GPS lady was off by 3 miles on this park – she is usually dead on – and it got me confused for a while. Internet was very flakey and weak. In the park, internet came and went – mostly went. It's right on the fringe.....too many people log on, and the fringe contracts – and you lose coverage. Maybe five minutes later, you have it back weakly. That made it tough to spot. Got my 44 – with a lot of work. Whew! It's not as easy as the National Parks that had hundreds and hundreds of chasers. Now, there's probably a hundred or so serious park chasers. Maybe it will catch on. All the previous NPOTA activations (most of them) count toward WWFF awards and they are very nice awards (no charge) you get electronically and can print.



Here's an example of a WWFF award given to Jess, W6LEN, for having worked entities in 42 states:



There are all sorts of levels and awards to work toward. They are 'free' too – you get a digital copy and can print them off on your printer!

Then it was time to head home through Kaufman. The trip was 425 miles in two days through a dozen counties and six parks.

More to come.

Here's two of the WWFF Awards that N4CD qualified for:



For activating 132 different WWFF entities

and this 'chaser certificate' for working WWFF entities in 44 states



For the WWFF people, '44' is a magic number. Instead of sending '73' at the end of a QSO, they might send '44' for WWFF

Lots of New Hams Licensed

from the ARRL Weekly Newsletter:

Last year -- 2016 -- was another outstanding one for Amateur Radio licensing, says ARRL Volunteer Examiner Coordinator (VEC) Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM. Total Amateur Radio licenses in the US from 2000 until 2016. [Per statistics compiled by Joe Speroni, AH0A]

"New Amateur Radio licenses issued were up by 1% over 2015, and this is the third year in a row that the total number of new licenses has exceeded 30,000," Somma reported.

She said 32,552 were granted in 2016, 32,077 in 2015, and 33,241 in 2014.

Somma said that while 2014 was a record-setting year for new licenses issued, ARRL VEC "continues to see an elevated interest in obtaining an Amateur Radio license."

The overall trend continues to be up, up, up! The total number of US Amateur Radio licensees has continued to grow each year since the FCC eliminated the Morse code exam requirement in 2007. Over the past decade, the net number of Amateur Radio licensees has risen by nearly 87,000, according to statistics compiled by ARRL Pacific Section Manager Joe Speroni, AH0A.

As of December 31, 2016, the total number of licensees in the FCC database was 742,787, topping the 2015 total of 735,405, but down just slightly from the all-time high of 743,003 reached last November. ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM. [Rick Lindquist, WW1ME, photo]

Somma said license upgrades were down by 5% compared to 2015 -- 10,617 versus 11,224. "A new Amateur Extra class [question] pool took effect on July 1, 2016, which may have impacted upgrade totals in the second half of the year," she speculated.

As of December 31, according to figures compiled by Speroni, there were 143,337 Amateur Extra licensees, 45,071 Advanced licensees, 172,807 General licensees, 371,560 Technician licensees, and 10,012 Novice licensees. The FCC no longer issues Advanced and Novice class licenses. The General and Technician licensee totals at the end of last year were all-time highs, and the Amateur Extra total was nearly so."

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de N4CD – I know both of the radio clubs I attend have seen large increases in membership. The Plano club now has over 140 members and the Richardson Club has over 100 on the roster. Both have Elmering programs and active VE sessions.

Many start out as Techsand quite a few upgrade to General and Extra within a short time.

Minnesota QSO Party

As usual, this was an excellent QSO party with mobiles headed all over the state. On W6RK the spots were flying by for just about all the counties – with activity moving to 40 and 80m in the evening.

From the 3830 reflector:

N1CC/QRP in TX reported 70 cw 50 ssb with 50 multipliers

As found last year, the many mobiles made hunting good fun. In 2016 there were 10 Mobiles, and I made 66 total mobile contacts. 2017 found 13 Mobiles, and netted me 47 contacts with QRP power.

Most of the mobiles were consistently stronger than "home" stations. In fact my first QSO, and the only one made on 80 Meters was W0ZQ, the leader of the Pack: W0ZQ (10), N0IJ (9), K0PC, NR0T, AND N0UR (5 EACH), KE0TT, K0LD, N0EO, KC0DMF, AND K0ARF (2 EACH) THEN WB0POQ, W9FZ, AND W0WX EACH WITH 1 CONTACT.

We all understand that on QRP we make more calls to get the contacts, because we as QRP stations are on the weak side. However, some of the folks probably need to work on their local noise and on their receive setups - a good thing for the MWA would be to run Contest University to teach some of the folks "how to listen".

Ed, KN4Y, reported catching 32 cw QSO after he got home from bowling tournament.

N2CU – fixed NY 239 cw 29 ssb 87 mults

Another fine running of the MNQP. You can't do a thing about conditions, so you might as well grin and bear it. This is a contest that I just can't miss, no matter what. I even put only a token appearance in the CQ 160 last weekend so I could save my kitchen points for the big event. Glad I did. Although my score is 10,000+ points less than last year, I still managed to get another sweep (my

second in all the years of running this contest).

I almost got off on the wrong foot by thinking the contest started at 10 AM local. Went into the shack at 8:15 AM to set up the contest logger and was surprised when I read the rules (always a good thing) and found it starts at 9 AM local. You would think I would know this after playing in this one every year.

I was looking forward to getting a couple dozen QSOs from Rich, N0HJZ, but when I went to 14256 at the start, nary a peep. And not much else heard on 20m either. Gee, I hope Rich didn't say hello to one of the ditches along the icy roads. Down to 80 CW to grab some quick QSOs while the propagation still allowed and then off to the races. I kept checking 14256 and thereabouts but still no Rich. In fact, not much else was heard from MN on 20m SSB.

Someone mentioned things starting off slowly; I experienced that every year when I go mobile in the PA and NY QSO parties. However, in the MNQP the first hour was my best (42 QSOs) followed by the last hour (36 QSOs).

Of particular note was that the mobiles and rovers had better signals than fixed stations. Please explain that to me! Jon, W0ZQ (rover), was pretty much S9 everywhere, as was N0EO. Mobiles K0PC and N0IJ had consistently good signals every time and always picked my callsign out of the pileup quickly.

With a couple of hours left I was in the 70's for county count. I was thinking that with activity from MN being down, there's no way to repeat the sweep from last year. But they kept coming one by one. With about 40 minutes to go, I was holding at 85. Then I came across a "net" on 75m SSB. They were all MN stations running down a list of a dozen stations. At the time I needed only Carver and Cook. What's this? There's a Carver station on frequency. So I tried to break in when I could and joined a bunch of friendly MN ops who were more than happy to give me a Q and work NY in return. Carver went in the log. Then I mentioned that I only needed Cook, and Bob, K0RC, told me that N0IJ was going to be there in about 15 minutes. I thanked everyone and politely backed out of the net to look for John. My bandmap showed his last frequency on 80 CW and sure enough, there he was. But in Lake county (I believe). I worked him and then asked about Cook. Seven more minutes was his reply, so I just hung out there waiting to pounce. When I heard him tell everyone to QRX, I knew what it meant; he was entering Cook. So I threw in my call just to let him know I was standing by. As soon as he got back on he called me and Cook was in the log. How sweep

it is!

Great job by all the mobiles and fixed stations getting all 87 counties on the air. QSO leaders were: N0IJ (36), K0PC (35), W0ZQ (25), NR0T and N0UR (21), N0EO (16). Kudos to KE0TT (7), who I believe was QRP and had a great signal. I had 4-band QSOs with AE0EE and K0MPH.

A big thank you to the MWA and other clubs that sponsor this event. It's one of my favorites, and as I said earlier, I wouldn't miss it.

K3/100, TH6DXX @ 48', 40m Delta Loop, 80m Wire Vertical, 160m Inverted L @ 46', N1MM.

73, Tom N2CU

K0PC mobile

I guess 2017 was the year Murphy struck MNQP hard. I can only blame him for the lousy band conditions, the rest of the problem was self-inflicted. I did a one-man operation this year so I was recording the contest audio to transcribe later into the log. My recording program saves the audio to a file every hour and continues on. Well, I didn't have it set up right and it stopped after the saving the first hour. It took me half an hour to notice it and get it recording again.

So my log has a big hole in it and I can't even submit it as a check log. Sorry guys. I had to put a score of 1 here to get the robot to accept it.

I did carry on with my planned route even though my score was shot. There were a lot of guys on the other end looking for the counties I committed to. Road and weather conditions were great, band conditions were lousy. I guess I have to look on the bright side. The mice didn't snack on my car (N0HJZ/m) and the radio doesn't have parts hanging out of it (K0LD/m).

I'm already looking forward to MNQP 2018, the twentieth year of MWA sponsorship!

73, Pat K0PC

W0ZQ mobile

The quarantine of my mobile seemed to have worked towards avoiding the Murphy bug that hit our mobile group hard this year. Only one minor Murphy-like story to tell. By mid-morning I noticed that the charge symbol on my lap top wasn't ON indicating I was operating on batteries. Hmmm. A check of the computer charger jack showed the charger cord was plug in. I looked in the accessory slot and I could see that the charger was inserted into the ACC power outlet and was illuminated, so what was the deal? I had perhaps another hour of battery life before the lap top would die and I wasn't looking forward to pen and paper. I pulled out my volt meter and checked the voltage on the power plug going into the computer and sure enough, no juice there yet the power plug was illuminated. Maybe a bad wire? So I pulled on the power plug (those who mobile know how many cables there are in a mobile setup!) and after running the cord down, out came an entirely different power plug. Huh. It seemed that I had plugged my extra cell phone power charger into the ACC outlet, that was what was illuminated, and not the computer charger power plug. Whew. After unplugging the cell phone charger and plugging in the computer charger, the computer greeted me with a happy "charging" symbol. Other than that, no problems to report.

I decided to make this a relaxing drive, so no SSB while I was driving. The roads were clear this year, starting temperature of 19, ending around 30 with mostly sunny skies. The mid-day wind was very strong, probably sustained around 25 with higher gust. Otherwise the road and weather conditions were about as good as you can get for MN in Feb. Propagation wise, it was a strange day. There were times when the bands seemed to be coming back, then there were times on 40m that I thought that I was the only one on. 80m at the start produced some Q's, but dwindled quickly so I did not revisit it until towards the end. Of my 672 Q's, 105 were on 80m (15%), 373 on 40m (55%) and 195 on 20m (30%). Never heard any short(er) skip on 20m; no IL, OH, etc.

The 80m pile-up's at the end of the day from MRT and WAT were a bit hard for me to handle. I think with age my fingers have gotten bigger and the keyboard smaller as I could not believe how many calls I "fat fingered". It doesn't help that its at the end of a long day and getting dark (ie, hard to see the keyboard). Also, as a mobile/rover, I plead that guys spread out just a few tens of hertz (or more) as the spots put everyone on the same freq. Guys who

got through the best were fast, crisp and slightly off freq, plus had good timing.

I had 19 DX Q's. Of those, 13 were with OM2VL (8 on 20m, 3 on 40m, and 2 on 80m), with other 20m Q's with DK2OY, DL3GA, SM6BGG, and UA3AGW. Some of the MN and state-side Q's were mere whispers; call sign recognition is good for about 6 dB.

Here are the number of Q's from each county and in the order of activation: BRO(36), RDW(51), COT(48), MUR(55), LYO(44), LIN(42), PIP(48), ROC(58), NOB(80), JAC(57), MRT(75), and WAT(78). Lincoln and Rock counties were two new ones for me on my quest to operate from all 87 in the MnQP; only 28 more to go.

Thanks for all the Q's and a full day of radio !

ND0C – 63 QSO

My nine year old daughter, Kylee, who is not yet licensed, told me about a month ago, that she was looking forward to operating in the MNQP this year, as she had done a couple years ago. So I abandoned my plans of making a serious run at the QRP title so she could operate.

It was only a part-time operation, after all a nine year old has a lot going on! For example, she took a break to go play with her Barbies! Barbies have never been a challenge to my BIC time! But she had fun and so did I. She was bummed when the contest ended so I reminded her that if she had gotten on the air when the contest started, she would have had much longer to operate! (But her cat was commanding her attention early in the morning!)

Kylee made all the contacts while I logged and served as the control operator. She really did a good job and the fact that we were only running 5 watts didn't seem to be a big issue, except a couple times we were not able to hold a frequency.

Since there were two of us, I'm entering this as a multi-op - I think that's the only right way to do it!"

KE0TT Rover 243 cw 0 Mults = 71

K3/10 at 5 watts to a 66' inverted vee fed at 21' high, or a 22' vertical with radials laid out on the ground (snow). Thanks for your great copy of my QRP sigs, always fun to see what 5 watts will do. OM2VL: 2 QSO's, VE7JH, several CA and FL on 40M, for examples. Temps were pretty decent for a February day in MN: started at 12F and by late afternoon, was about 32F with bright sunshine, so had to crack the windows on the SUV to keep cool. The wind was howling in the morning, rocking the SUV while sitting still, but subsided by late afternoon. All in all, enjoyed the day. Covered 7 counties. Discovered I spent 4:15 hours of the 10 hours driving and 5:45 hours contesting. Hmmm. May make some changes next year... C U next time,

73, Dan ke0tt

N0IJ mobile 851 cw QSO

Many thanks to my exceptional driver, Brian, NX0X for keeping us perfectly on time for all 10 hours of the contest and making all 24 counties. 720 miles for the day and 525 miles during the contest. Conditions less than hoped for, but occasional good openings really helped. Lots of fun picking up the good number of folks who followed us from county to county. Highlights were working N2CU for the 35th time and giving his last MN county for an 87 county sweep!, and having OM2VL call in with a great signal on 80 meters. Besides N2CU, our BIG THANKS go to the following stations: K1RO--25, WB5JID-24, W7GKF & K9CS--19, K8KZB--18, W8WVU--17, N6MU--15 (great job from CA), and WO9B, NW0M, W0BH--14.

In MN, N0BUI comes out on top with 16. Special thanks to Laci, OM2VL for 12 Q's.

Thanks to all for the q's and helping to make the MN QSO party a success.

73

John, N0IJ

John, N6MU, from CA had 122CW QSO and 67 multipliers

K1RO in NH turned in 172 cw 35 ssb qso in 78 multipliers

Special Needs Section

The needs page is located at <http://countyhunterweb.org/DisplayNeeds.php>

There you will find the listed county needs for those working on the USCA and MARAC Awards. From that page, some selected needs for some folks close to finishing up. See if you can help

WA2VYA - USACA Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/21/2017

CO: Ouray, San Juan
KY: Breckinridge, Casey, Crittenden, Hancock, Knott, Spencer
MT: Carbon
NC: Graham
NE: Merrick
NV: Humboldt, Mineral
SC: McCormick
SD: Sully
TX: Haskell, Live Oak, Orange
VA: King William

PA3ARM - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/2/2017

AK: First J. D. S E
AL: Covington, Lamar
AZ: Santa Cruz
CA: Siskyou
CO: Clear Creek, Grant, Jackson, Mineral, Pitkin, Routt, Summit
HI: Kalawao
ID: Clearwater
IN: Shelby
KS: Grant, Jefferson, Pottawatomie, Stanton
KY: Casey, Green, Hancock, Knox, Perry, Wolfe

LA: Beauregard, East Feliciana, Pointe Coupee, Washington, West Feliciana
MT: Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Treasure
NE: Box Butte, Cass, Johnson, Scotts Bluff, Sioux
OR: Benton, Columbia, Crook, Grant, Josephine, Lake, Lincoln, Tillamook, Wheeler
SD: Brule
TX: Calhoun, Comanche, Coryell, Duval, Ector, Hutchinson, Jeff Davis, Lamb,
Lampasas, Nolan, Pecos, Upton, Ward
UT: Tooele
WA: Wahkiakum
WV: Marshall

W3CR - 9th Times Award using SSB Only - Updated:1/30/2017

14 to complete 9th time. All needs listed.

AK: Second J. D. N W
AL: Bibb, Randolph
HI: Maui
MO: Lewis
MT: Blaine, Glacier, Phillips
OR: Linn, Wallowa
WA: Columbia, Garfield, Skamania, Whatcom
WV: Mineral

WA3QNT - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/20/2017

For WBOW !!! WBOW WBOW WBOW

GA: Bacon, Screven, Tattnall, Walker
IN: Daviess
MT: Dawson, Wibaux
NY: Orleans
PA: Sullivan
WV: Lincoln, Roane

KC3X - 20m Band Award using CW Only - Updated:1/4/2017

I need just a few on 20 meters CW to complete my all 20 meter CW award. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

GA: Appling, Toombs, Turner, Wheeler
IN: Harrison
KY: Hart, Knott, Washington
NY: Schuyler
OH: Butler
PA: Bradford, Clinton, Columbia, Mifflin, Philadelphia

TN: Anderson, Hancock
VA: Orange
WV: Wyoming

K4AMC - 2nd Time Award using CW Only - Updated:1/16/2017

Getting close for CW II.

AL: Cleburne
KY: Taylor
NE: Loup

AA4GT - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/6/2017

AR

GA: Lincoln, Madison, Terrell
IA: Lucas
IN: Fulton, Randolph
KY: Fleming, Harlan, Johnson, Marion

WD4OIN - 20m Band Award using SSB Only - Updated:1/25/2017

PA: Huntingdon
VA: Dickenson

WA4UNS - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:2/1/2017

8 left to go. [160816-1117] Back in class this semester... advance notice still appreciated

GA: Chattooga
IN: Noble, Washington
MI: Ionia
NY: Wayne
OH: Henry, Lawrence, Medina

WA4UNS - 5th Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:2/1/2017

10 to finish... Everything listed. [160909-1111] Back in class this semester... advance notification still appreciated

GA: Hall, Pike, Upson
KY: Letcher
NY: Hamilton
OR: Benton
VA: Powhatan, Russell
WV: Boone, Lincoln

WA4WKL - USACA Award using SSB and CW - Updated:1/14/2017

GA: Atkinson, Jeff Davis
KY: Breathitt, Lewis, Wolfe
NC: Gates

W4YDY - 2nd Time Award using CW Only - Updated:1/10/2017

CA: Alpine
GA: Long
IL: Lawrence, Pulaski
IN: Lawrence, Miami
KY: Breathitt, Monroe
MT: Mineral, Rosebud
NM: Curry
OR: Crook, Wheeler
PA: Greene, Mifflin, Montour
SC: Lee, Newberry
WV: Calhoun, Jackson, Putnam

K4YFH - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/1/2017

CA: Madera, Sutter.
CO: Otero, San Juan.
MS: Greene, Leake.
NE: Grant, Wayne.
OR: Clackmas, Crook.
PA: Montour, Sullivan.
UT: Duchesne, Piute, Sanpete.

K4YT - 2nd Time Award using CW Only - Updated:1/9/2017

IA: Monroe
KY: Breathitt, Knox, Lawrence, Lewis, Owsley, Whitley
MD: Baltimore City, Cecil, Dorchester
MO: Reynolds
NC: Clay, Wilkes
NE: Chase, Perkins
NJ: Cape May
OR: Benton
PA: Montour
SD: Potter, Sully

KD5YUK - 3rd Time Award using SSB Only - Updated:1/21/2017

AK: Second J. D. N W
FL: Liberty
GA: Clinch
IN: Fayette, Lawrence, Ohio, Union
KS: Stevens
KY: Elliott, Hancock, Johnson, Lewis, Lincoln, Mason, Mclean, Morgan, Powell
MA: Plymouth
ME: Androscoggin
MN: Norman
NJ: Monmouth
PA: Monroe, Sullivan
RI: Bristol
TX: Hays
VA: Highland, Sussex
WA: Douglas, Franklin, Pend Oreille, Stevens
WV: Boone, Clay, Lincoln, Mason

DL6KVA - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/9/2017

ID: Clearwater
LA: Evangeline
NM: Sierra
WV: Mingo

N6PDB - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/19/2017

A heads up would be nice and THIS is the list of ALL

GA: Pickens, Rabun
NC: Jackson
SC: Georgetown

N6PDB - 4th Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/19/2017

AL: Henry
GA: Fannin, Jones, Ware, Washington, Wheeler
ID: Washington
IN: Blackford
KY: Lincoln, Meade, Nicholas
MA: Barnstable, Nantucket
OH: Holmes
PA: Clinton, Lycoming, Monroe, Northumberland
TN: Anderson

VA: Craig
VT: Orleans
WV: Jackson

K7DM - 2nd Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/15/2017

16 to go and this list shows everything I need.

GA: Baldwin, Fannin, Turner, White
IL: Clay
IN: Fayette
KY: Jessamine, Larue, McCreary, McLean
NC: Madison, Mitchell, Yancey
PA: Delaware
TN: Claiborne, Fentress

KA7ICF - USACA Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/28/2017

EMAIL ka7icf@cableone.net cell 775-340-0121 SSB/CW GUARD 20m 30M 40M
PERRY, KY LAST FOR WKD ALL CNTYS. THANKS JR

KY: Perry

N7LFX - Bingo Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/29/2017

GA: Wayne
IN: Montgomery
KY: Larue
OH: Madison

N7LFX - 20m Band Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/29/2017

CA: Mendocino, Plumas, Trinity
ID: Adams, Boise, Clearwater, Washington
NV: Lander
OR: Coos, Lincoln, Yamhill
VA: Cumberland
WA: Cowlitz

K7REL - Bingo 5 Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/30/2017

MD: Howard, Wicomico
PA: Delaware

AB7RW - 3rd Time Award using CW Only - Updated:1/21/2017

KY: Knott, Leslie, Magoffin, Meade, Perry
NC: Clay
NJ: Salem
VT: Orange

AB7RW - Bingo 2 Award using CW Only - Updated:1/21/2017

GA: Glascock, Washington
KY: Knott, Leslie, Meade, Perry
LA: Caldwell
OH: Morgan

KK7X - 20m Band Award using SSB Only - Updated:1/24/2017

Counties need for Toplist, not for any particular award

KY: Martin
NC: Yancey

WY8I - 2nd Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/11/2017

KY: Clinton, Union
MN: Pine

WY8I - 5 Star Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/11/2017

AK: Second J. D. N W
ID: Lewis
WA: Douglas, Island

WA9DLB - 6th Time Award using SSB Only - Updated:1/14/2017

WY: campbell, crook, goshen, hot spring, teton, washakie, weston
KY: Allen, Logan, McCreary, Todd
LA: St. James
ND: Burke, Eddy, Grant, Mountrail
VA: Amelia, Buchanan, Russell
WA: Cowlitz

KA9JAC - 4th Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/5/2017

Getting closer, Please let me know if you might be heading towards any of these.

KS: Atchison
ND: Cavalier, Dickey, Emmons, La Moure
NE: Franklin
OR: Coos
TN: Hancock

N9JF - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/22/2017

Down to 26 to go for all CW. This is the WHOLE LIST.

AR: Baxter, Izard
IA: Kossuth, Wayne, Winnebago
IN: Greene, Rush
KY: Boyle, Breathitt, Elliot, Harlan, Magoffin, Mercer, Morgan
LA: East Carroll
MO: Knox
MT: Beaverhead
SC: Kershaw, Lancaster
SD: Aurora
TX: Medina, Starr
WV: Brooke, Marshall

W9MSE - 6th Time Award using CW Only - Updated:1/10/2017

IL: Boone
KY: Campbell, Larue
ME: Knox, Lincoln, Somerset
MT: Deer Lodge
NC: Polk
OR: Grant, Tillamook
PA: Bradford
WI: Crawford, Oneida

W9MSE - 5 Star Award using CW Only - Updated:1/10/2017

CA: Nevada 1), Placer 1)
IL: Boone 1), Carroll 3), Dekalb 4), Dupage 1), Kane 1), Lawrence 1), McHenry 1)
WI: Buffalo 1)

KØDEQ - 2nd Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/2/2017

AL: Choctaw
ID: Caribou, Custer
IL: Wabash
IN: Fulton
KY: Caldwell
LA: Catahoula, St. Mary
MS: Issaquena, Scott, Sharkey
MT: Garfield
NC: Burke, Mitchell, Yancey

NE: Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee
SC: Saluda, Williamsburg
TN: Hancock
TX: Bailey, Bee, Crosby, Lamb, McMullen, Real

NØDXE - 2nd Time Award using Any Mode - Updated:1/18/2017

ALL listed. Appreciate a call or email. Thanks, Pat

AL: Crenshaw
AR: Randolph
GA: Douglas, Hancock, Treutlen
KY: Calloway, Martin
LA: Avoyelles, Grant, Jackson, LaSalle
NC: Montgomery, Stanly
NH: Belknap Grafton, Strafford
NY: Hamilton, Suffolk
VA: Northumberland

NØKV - USACA Award using CW Only - Updated:1/24/2017

All listed for 1st time CW. Any help appreciated. Please email N0KV@earthlink.net
303-841-6510

GA: Chattooga, Greene, Habersham, Jenkins, Warren
ID: Madison, Owyhee
IN: Madison, Switzerland
KY: Boyle, Knott, Logan, Mason, Meniffee
LA: Iberville, West Carroll
NC: Graham, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell
NY: Herkimer
SC: Allendale, Marion
SD: Buffalo, Jackson
WI: Rusk

Always check the CURRENT needs before you head out on.....at K3IMC special needs page.

Nebraska Week Long QSO Opportunity

Nebraska Sesquicentennial Celebration QSO Party Set for February, March
Radio amateurs in Nebraska will celebrate the state's 150th anniversary during the Sesquicentennial Anniversary Celebration Week QSO Party, starting on Saturday, February 25, and continuing until Sunday, March 6. That time period includes the actual anniversary date, March 1.

Nebraska radio amateurs may operate from their own stations or as part of Nebraska historical site activations, appending "/NE150" to their call signs. Nebraska stations transmit name, signal report, and Nebraska county (plus historical site, if appropriate). Non-Nebraska stations transmit name, signal report, and state, Canadian province, or DXCC entity.

A special QSL card will be available with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and QSL to the Nebraska station contacted. Contact ARRL Midwest Division Vice Director Art Zygielbaum, K0AIZ, or ARRL Nebraska Section Manager Matt Anderson, KB0BOJ, for additional information.

The Nebraska Sesquicentennial Amateur Radio Commemorative QSO Party is an official Nebraska Sesquicentennial event sanctioned by the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission.

Sunspot Cycles – Ancient Times

A pair of researchers affiliated with the Natural History Museum in Chemnitz and Technische Universität Bergakademie Freiberg, both in Germany, has found evidence in ancient tree rings of a solar sunspot cycle millions of years ago similar to the one

observed in more modern times. In their paper published in the journal *Geology*, Ludwig Luthardt and Ronny Rößler describe how they gathered an assortment of petrified tree samples from a region in Germany and used them to count sunspot cycles.

Scientists know that the sun undergoes a sunspot cycle of approximately 11 years—some spots appear, grow cooler and then slowly move toward the equator and eventually disappear—the changes to the sun spots cause changes to the brightness level of the sun—as the level waxes and wanes, plants here on Earth respond, growing more or less in a given year—this can be seen in the width of tree rings. In this new effort, the researchers gathered petrified tree samples from a region of Germany that was covered by lava during a volcanic eruption approximately 290 million years ago (during the Permian period), offering a historical record of sun activity.

The research pair obtained 43 petrified tree specimens (tree-trunk slices) and report that they were able to count 1,917 rings which were preserved well enough to allow for observation under a microscope. Because the trees had all died at the same time, the researchers were able to establish a baseline between them which allowed for comparing tree ring growth between samples over the same time periods—which covered 79 years. Doing so, they report, revealed very clearly a cycle of growth similar to that seen in modern trees, though in this case, it was slightly different. Today the cycle is an average of 11.2 years, back then it was 10.6—close enough, the researchers suggest, to conclude that the sun has been behaving very predictably for at least 290 million years.

It should be noted that not everyone agrees with the theory that [sunspot activity](#) leaves such a clear record in [tree rings](#)—other factors might be involved such as general global temperature, weather patterns or even outbreaks of insect populations.

Read more at: <https://phys.org/news/2017-01-ancient-tree-sunspot-ongoing-million.html#jCp>

AI5P Activity Summary

Bob's nice article about his NPOTA activity prompted my update about my mobile

activity - or lack thereof. I, too, was intrigued about the ARRL's National Parks on the Air (NPOTA) program for 2016. I set myself three goals - to activate all 18 of New Mexico's sites, work at least 100 NPOTA sites, and work at least one site in each state.

I was only active for about eight months of the year due to other travel and/or commitments. I'm happy to report I made all three goals - but just barely, HI! There were lots of issues with my car - a 2010 VW Jetta diesel - yes, the one recalled - more about that later. I finally was able to activate the 18 sites by the end of August with credit for 33 activations since several of them were activated more than once.

Cars: the VW, one rental car, and my new Mazda CX-5 (with a temporary radio set-up). I especially enjoyed visiting Carlsbad Caverns National Park (last seen about 40 years ago), Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, and Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Those last two were really off the beaten path. The last one (#18) was the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Los Alamos.

With all the activity, it was easy to work 100 sites - I ended up with 341 sites confirmed. Working the 50 states presented quite a challenge for my 100w and dipole. By the end of November, I was stuck at 49 and needing Alaska. I figured all was lost as I had yet to even hear a NPOTA site from Alaska. I believe I had only been on twice when there was a station on from Alaska (during the summer) and I didn't even hear a peep then. I was quite surprised to learn that WR8O planned to operate from Sitka National Historical Park (HP43 in the First Judicial District) for a couple of days in early Dec. I kept a lookout for any spots and suddenly there he was - both on 20 and 17m one day. Nothing heard.

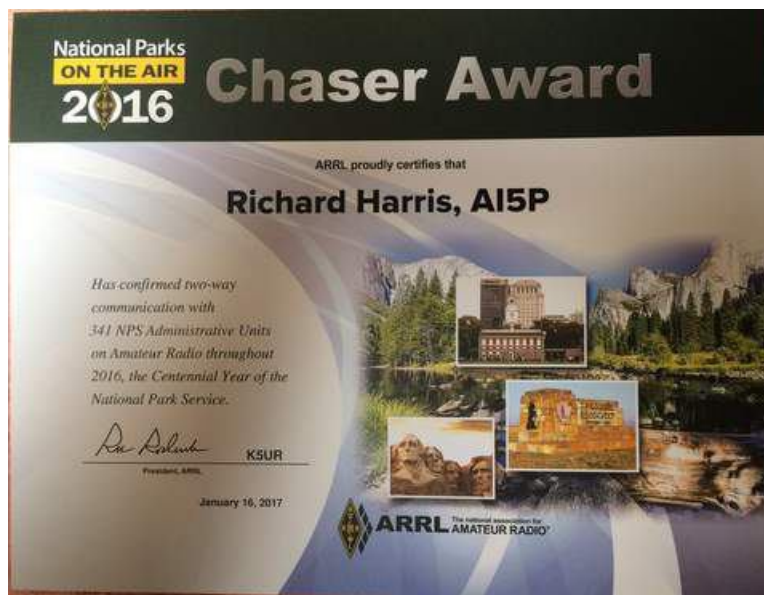
Anyone who has operated from Alaska knows the propagation can be a challenge to say the least. I could hear folks calling him on both bands. Disappointing to say the least. I thought I might have a shot on 17m so I changed my antenna (only one band at a time with my limited antenna situation on the roof). The next day more spots on 17m - nothing again! I was ready to give up when later in the afternoon I saw him spotted again on 20 meters. Up goes the ladder, onto the roof, change dipoles... low and behold, I could hear him still on the air and the signal was building. In about 30 minutes I was able to work him... boy, I was sure lucky he stayed on the air! I was one happy camper for sure.

All the states were confirmed on LOTW but, at this writing, I still awaiting two QSLs to make my special NPOTA WAS.

About the car - In January I was finally able to sell the car back to VW. I received a nice

check - but it probably didn't cover all the expenses and trouble I had with that car. Now I'm in the process of getting the proper mobile installation worked out for the Mazda and hope to be back on the road putting out some counties in a couple of months. More to follow on my mobile plans later!

In case you haven't seen one of the NPOTA certificates - there are 3 available: Activator, Chaser, and Honor Roll (for working at least 41 of the 55 National Parks actually activated - there are 59 National Parks - three in Alaska weren't activated and the one in American Samoa didn't have the 10 minimum QSO's to quality (only 6 Q's)) - here is an example:



Vermont QSO Party

Yes, there was a VT QSO Party. As usual activity was sparse. I worked one station, K1VMT- Lamoille County - cw - and that was all I heard here in TX. Conditions were not great for the weekend to TX. Lots of activity was on 40 and 80m.

However, K2TOM in Orange, N1XSS in Windsor, W1GVT in Essex, W1NVT, KB1WXM, and KB1FRW in Chittenden, N1GBB in Washington were spotted on W6RK and likely a few others were on but not spotted. So half the state was on and maybe more. How many did you catch?

Just a few filed a report on the 3830 contest reflector.

KS4X in TN had 23 SSB QSO and one CW one for 10 mults on SSB and 1 on CW.

WN4AFP 14 cw 29 ssb 1 digital

In the 2016 VTQP I misread the rules and stopped working it after the first 24 hours. This year I worked it before, during and after the MNQP. Hat's off to N1GVT doing an amazing job from the mobile operation... thanks for 11 of my 44 contacts. Thanks to many stations that worked me on multiple bands and modes. This is my 4th VTQP and I decided to work it hard. I even worked K1VMT on PSK31 (this was my 4th PSK31 contact of all time). Band conditions were pretty good on Saturday, but they declined sharply on Sunday. The self-spotting rule change and the amazing mobile operation of N1GVT really took the VTQP up to the next level. Thanks to the club sponsor and all those who participated this year! See ya in 2018!

73s Dave WN4AFP

On the Road with N4CD II

On the way to the convention – the county hunter way

The short way from my house to Houston is about 4 1/2 to 5 hours straight down the interstate I-45. Once I get five miles from my house, it is non-stop with no traffic lights till I reach the hotel – 250 miles or so. That's not the county hunter way, though. So I'd take 3 1/2 days to reach the destination via many state parks and counties along the way. The weather was going to be very nice for February – in the 70s for highs. That's about 7 to 10 deg above average. Likely we'll get some cold spells to average it out later.

Each year around mid February, the Houston Vintage Radio Society holds their annual convention in Houston TX. It's an opportunity to see many antique radios – both on display and also available for sale in two auctions on Friday and Saturday. There would be hundreds of radios up for sale. Maybe I'd catch a regen up for sale.

I headed out a few days early to head through various TX State Parks which I could 'activate' for the WWFF awards system. Last year I was busy in the ARRL National Parks on the Air program – and did 45,000 miles of driving through 262 different park units in 40 states. This year I'd probably slow down a bit, but there are thousands of counties to run along the way and even more state parks to hit – several thousand in the US. There's the trips to the MI Mini, the Dayton Hamfest, the Annual MARAC Convention – all likely to hit state parks this year!

I left on a Tuesday and would have to head down through the Dallas MetroPlex – so I left late to avoid rush hour. At 8 am on a weekday, the 30 miles to and through downtown can take 90 minutes. Wait another hour and it's just 45 minutes typically. So I waited to start the trip to the southeast. At the later hour, I made it through with minimal problems and headed down through Ellis and Navarro to the first park – Fort Parker in Limestone County TX.

Fort Parker goes back to the 1830s – to protect against Indian raids. It didn't do too well, and when Indians came begging for food, the Indians took five captives at the fort. It was quickly abandoned and fell into disuse.

The State Park does not include the old fort site. The park came about when the town and 3 local landowners donated land to form a park. The CCC built a dam on the river forming a lake, built campgrounds and trails – this in the 1930s naturally, and it became

a state park. The nearby fort was also rebuilt. I pulled in, found a nice spot to operate and put 70 contacts in the log including a few of the DX park chasers – like ON4VT, F2YT, ON7NQ, IZ8DFO, CU3AA. To get credit for an activation, you need to make 10 contacts. To have the park officially activated – a total of 44 contacts must have been made from the park – by any number of people on any number of days. I'd try to do both on the same visit on all the upcoming parks. Some times it's a real challenge to get to the 44 number with the current band conditions. If you can't self spot – it can be a real problem! All went well and I left the park in 90 minutes headed to the next. It was lunch time already.

I appreciate the county hunter contacts – even if you don't 'need' the county. Helps to reach the magic 44 number. Not only that, all the park contacts get uploaded, so you will be getting credit for the parks – whether you currently participate in WWFF or not. More on that later.

Next up was Fairfield State Park over in Freestone County – arrived at 19:17Z and proceeded to get 74 contacts from here. It's on the shores of Lake Fairfield with campsites, boating, fishing for 'redfish' and more. Pulled in and had a nice time making radio contacts – enjoyed warm weather and sun – no complaints! Appreciate the county hunter contacts which are half the QSOs. It was a good start on the trip.

I headed over to a nearby Super 8 in Palestine TX for the night. Wandered to a King Buffet- Chinese – very good. Slept well.

Wednesday

On Wednesday (2/8) morning I headed east over the Mission Tejas State Park in Houston County TX. This is a small park constructed by the CCC back in the 1930s from land purchased by the state forestry department. There's only 15 campsites there. Spanish artifacts were found here and it is believed to be the site of the oldest Spanish mission in TX along the El Camino Real del Tejas National Historic Trail. The mission was reconstructed in 1935 by the CCC. The original one was built in 1690 and abandoned in 1693 after two years of crop failures and increased tensions with the natives. Those CCC folks were real busy building many of the TX state parks back then, and probably in most states around the country during the Great Depression! These were all 'make work' projects that employed hundreds of thousands of people and today we get to enjoy the facilities that they created or improved.



Last year the trail was part of the NPOTA program, but the trails are currently not in the WWFF system – which deals primarily with sites with 'wildlife' and 'fauna' – scenic places and areas that protect the environment for critters and fish. About 2/3rds of the NPOTA units have corresponding KFF-designators. The ones left out include the Associated Areas (AA-xx) and the historic and scenic trails (TR-xx).

Did my runs and barely squeaked by at 46 QSOs to officially activate this park. Whew! Close one. It was early in the day. This park is near the home of Cecil Miles – who appeared on the American Pickers program a few years back when they came to visit. I've stopped by there for a swap session – he's a member of the Antique Wireless clubs in both Dallas and Houston. He gave a program at one on his experience with the Pickers - quite a bit different than what you see on the TV – naturally to get to show quality there's a lot of stuff going on behind the scenes and lots of camera set up. I met him again in Houston and he's still occasionally collecting stuff!

Next up was Foggy Boggy SP in Leon County – created just in 1985 as land was donated to the state. No camping but fishing (they'll loan you a rod and tackle), hiking, swimming, etc. About 70Q went in the log mid day. I was doing from 8 to 15 contacts on 20m SSB – the rest were cw on 20/30/40m with usually just 2 or 3 or 4 on 40M SSB. 40M is noisy over most of TX with high background noise.

Headed out to the next one going south - Huntsville SP not far off I-45 Interstate in Leon County. Pulled in 1700Z and gave out 70 QSOs to county hunters and park chasers. Half a dozen county hunters – including KA9JAC, W0MU, NF0N are seriously chasing the different WWFF parks now. This park – surprise – was built by the CCC in the

1930s. A dam was constructed forming Lake Raven for swimming. Ran the bands and put 70 in the log including N8KIE from HI!



You might want to think twice about swimming in the nearby rivers. Stick to the swimming lake!



It was time for a rest – Days Inn in Huntsville. Dinner at the Golden Corral. Got my fill of veggies and stuff. Slept well.

Thursday

Next morning, after nice breakfast at the motel, I was on the road headed to Lake Livingston State Park in the Piney Woods section of TX. Texas is divided into seven regions. Fortunately the GPS has most of the state parks in the database but sometimes will miss by a few miles actually finding the entrance. It usually gets you close enough

so you see signs for the park and can get there. Do plan ahead and write down a street address as well – that might work in the GPS if it doesn't know where the park itself is or it's not in the GPS database. Along the shore of large Lake Livingston, this park offers camping, boat launch facilities, fishing, hiking, etc. It was early – 14:30z – but had good runs and got over the magic 44 QSOs. Thanks for the Q's.

I headed further east through San Jacinto and Tyler, TX over to Martin Dies state park in Jasper. This park has several units – some in Tyler, some in Jasper county. It's on the banks of the Steinhagen Reservoir. Pulled in, ran the bands and achieved the 44+ QSO. Good! This park was created in the 1940s when the dam to create the reservoir was constructed. It's on the north side of the Big Thicket area of TX.



OK.....I'm not going anywhere near the alligators! I didn't realize there are so many places in TX to watch out for alligators! The Big Thicket part of TX is often swampy along the rivers. Just over the border into LA you've got the 'bayous'.

I could hit one more today and that would be Village Creek State Park to the south. Worked out well with 55+ Qs in the log. Created in 1994, this park is in the Piney Woods section of Texas. Hardin County.

Then time to head on in to the small town of Kountze TX to a Super 8 motel. Not much else in the town – everyone is busy driving the 4 lane highway that connects larger towns together. Only fast food – like Sonic or the DQ here – or one sort of sit down but mostly take out place – Captain Ron's seafood. All sorts of fried seafood. Oysters. Some white fish. A 'dinner' came with two sides – had green beans and redbeans/rice plus the combo plate. Adequate but nothing to write home about – did fill me up. There were half a dozen tables – and a few teens hanging out there. This town is a bump in the road and I'm surprised there was a Super 8 there. The weather was great – 70s – clear – took a nice long walk after dinner. Well, it was getting on time to get into Houston for the convention the next day.

Friday

On Friday, I could hit a few on the way in – and get to the Houston Marriott before the auctions started at 3pm. First up was a repeat of the Big Thicket Preserve PV04 which was popular last year for NPOTA. Nearly all the NPOTA units – minus trails, rivers, and some monuments – are now in the WWFF system. So I'd hit KFF-0689 for a quick activation and scam after at least 10 for credit. It was a 300 foot detour off the route and I couldn't resist. Did 27 quick Qs 20/30/40cw and had to get moving. That gave me an 'activation credit'. (more than 10). There were new ones to run and officially activate if I could get to 44Q.

Next up was something new for me. The WWFF includes National Wildlife Reserves – and there are a handful in TX. Now – these are often very protected areas – with limited access or no vehicular access. I'd find out. Some require permits to 'visit'. The TX website listed an address for the reserve and I headed there not knowing what to expect. You look on web maps (Mapquest, etc) and it shows the area but no roads to it. Hmmm.. Well, might as well investigate as it was right on the route. Found the HQ building at the address listed – and pulled in – and sat in their lot. Figured just like NPOTA, the 'visitor center' is fair game – it's part of the 'park' Did my band hopping and had good runs – over the magic 44 number.

Jerry, W0GXQ was busy up in MN on a day trip around the NW corner of the state. Ray, WB0PYF was headed to FL for the past two days. This is in Liberty County TX. WB0PYF had finally reached FL N4UP was active in NC. Luckily I had web access at

most sites in TX and could run off frequency by self spotting. I did run on 14.336 if no one was around. KB0BA/N0XYL were running on the alternate net freq of 14.324. Might as well use 336 since half the folks I work are county hunters – hi hi. Otherwise they'll be more random QSOs showing up there. Once N4UP showed up, worked me, and I finished up quickly and let him have the frequency to run his county in NC.

One more to go – Sheldon Lake SP and Environmental Learning Center in Harris County – and caught WQ7A for the Double Diamond contact there. Missed half a dozen DD counties. This sits on the edge of a reservoir created in the 1950s. It's close in to Houston – and you've got lots of wildlife to observe and good fishing here. Small boats allowed – no wake. Did 55Q and headed on out. Time to get to the convention.

At the Convention

Held at the same hotel each year – the Houston Vintage Radio Society has about 75 people show up for two days of auctions. You never know what will appear here – from really rare Catalin Radios (\$800 and up), to boatloads of essentially junkie, to boxes of plastic radios – five for five or ten bucks – to tons of 'wood radios' and 'plastic radios'. The 'cathedrals' can go for \$300 to \$800 depending upon rarity and what's in them. Boxes and boxes of tubes are sold – everything from 1920s tubes to 4CX500s. Some tubes go for \$50 or \$100 each like the power audio tubes from the 20s and 30s. Others you can buy boxes of 300 pulls for \$10. Or less.

The hotel is \$91/night plus about \$15 in taxes on top of that. Oh well....real nice place and on the north side of Houston so you usually miss all the traffic mess coming in from Dallas. It's like the county hunting convention rates that keep kicking up each year. Most of the Super 8/Days Inn along the way were in the 50-70 dollar range. You've got cheaper places in many towns – Motel 6 and other family budget places – but I'm not on a super tight budget to kick it up one notch.

Things start Friday after noon with a technical program or two, then the preview for the afternoon auction – with the auction starting at 2:30 or 3pm. A couple hundred lots would go by – including boxes and boxes of tubes, SAMS photofact sets by the dozens and dozens of boxes of old technical books and manuals, test equipment, a few pieces of ham equipment, plastic radios. There was exactly one thing I was set on getting – a home made regen receiver with a Compactron tube.

Remember Compactrons? Way back in the first color TV sets – tube manufacturers came up with these devices that contained three separate tube circuits in one fat envelope using one heater element. Up till then, 7 and 9 pin 'miniature tubes' could have

2 halves – perhaps a pentode and a triode, or two triodes but that was it. By adding a few more pins to reach 12, you could have three separate 'tubes' in one envelope, like two triodes and a pentode. It helped reduce the 'tube count' in those fairly complex TV sets, the filament power requirement, and the heat load. Millions and millions of Compactrons were made. The downside was - when one section went bad, you had to buy a new tube and they were a bit more than 7 and 9pin ones.

GE was a very large tube provider. Transistors were limited in HV handling and operating at VHF frequencies in 1960. This was a last gasp effort by GE to keep the tube cash machine and factories going. Nearly all the Compactron tubes were made for the TV industry – by the millions. Each one was targeted at a specific set of functions in the TV set, such as the 6T9 for the audio pre-amp and output stage. It would produce 5W of audio. They also talked about building an “All American Five” table radio with one tube but that never happened. The age of Compactrons lasted about 4-5 years before transistors got to the point where they could handle most, if not all, the functions needed for a TV set. Some hybrids had a few tubes and the rest transistors/diodes. Naturally, most of those TV sets kept going for another 10 years guaranteeing a healthy replacement tube market. They even crept into a few ham rigs. Here's a great page on reading about Compactrons if you don't mind a detour from the story

<http://www.junkbox.com/electronics/CompactronTubesIndex.shtml>

Another downside of the tubes was there were few 'chassis mount' sockets around – and even today they are fairly scarce. Nearly all the compactrons were mounted on PC boards. You've got to plan real well to avoid a total jungle of components attaching to the tube socket if you homebrew a project.

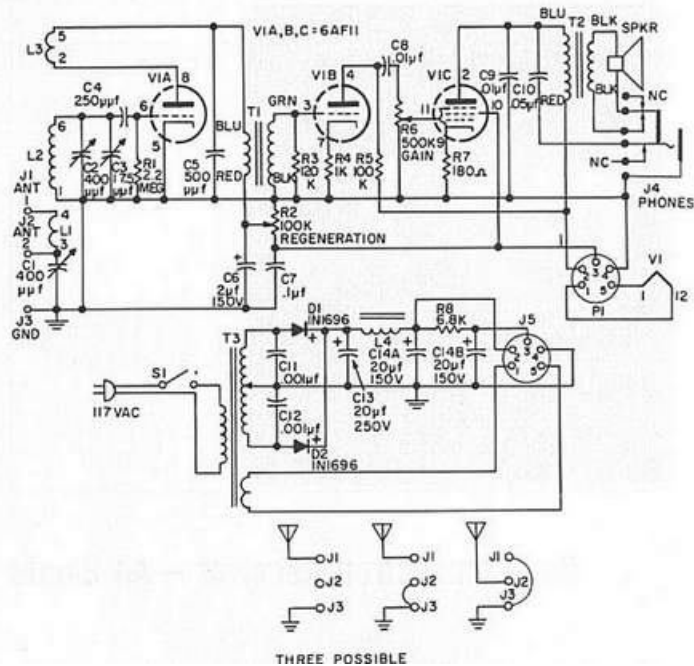
The homebrew regen up for sale had a plug in coil – and I recognized it right away as a regen. Others likely saw just an ugly 'thing a ma jig'.....and it was listed on the auction form as a 'RF test oscillator?'. It would come up for auction mid way through and I got it for the minimum bid- \$5! Yippee.



Compactron Based Regen



Top View – Plug in coil left – tube to right



This is a straightforward set – triode regen detector transformer coupled into a triode audio stage with pentode audio output. Not much different than the Knight Kit Space Spanner with used 3 miniature tubes to do the same – two triodes sections – one pentode.

I'll get around to firing it up one of these days. One bad part about the construction – the power supply is on the same chassis in close proximity – and regens are especially sensitive to hum pickup. It's better if the power supply is on a different chassis so you can separate the two – and avoid 'ground currents'. We'll see how it works it a bit. So many projects here!

I also bought a box with an Eico 717 Electronic Keyer in working condition – so said the seller afterwards – and a Daiwa power meter – for \$10. That keyer matched the very popular Eico 753 transceiver in the 1960s. Or you could use it with other rigs. About the only other commercial keyer back then was the Hallicrafters H.O. Keyer and that was big bucks. (I made my own out of an ARRL handbook in the early 60s! Clackety relay with 2 tubes – college days – little money to spend on ham gear!).



Eico 717 Electronic Keyer

That was it. Resisted everything else Friday afternoon/evening. There were 40 or 50 pieces of ham gear held over for Saturday's auction. Things ended around 8:30pm and it took another half hour to 'check out', pay for the items, and get them out to the car. \$3500 worth of items were sold on Friday.

Hit the hay at 9:30pm and slept like a rock all night.

Saturday

Had the 'breakfast buffet' there – it cost \$15 – ouch – but it was good – just about everything on the buffet including all sorts of fresh fruit, eggs, sausage, bacon, cereal....I ate my \$15 worth. But that is still EXPENSIVE. Didn't feel like getting out and fighting the Houston area traffic to save a few bucks, plus I could yak with a few fellow collectors too.....

There were a few technical programs. I took a look through the 'swap meet' area – not much there – and then checked out the items up for sale today. There were DOZENS of Hallicrafters, Hammurlund and National receivers up for sale. SX-99, 100, 101, 110, 111, etc. National HQ-100, 110, 180, to start. Half a dozen S-38s or more and the matching NC's. Literally tons of heavy metal. HT-37s, HT-32s, etc. All came out of

an estate, and many sold for \$10-\$50 each. One Drake 2A, one 2B – sold for \$60 and \$80. There was a Collins R-390 and it went for \$350 or so. Well, that was just a bit – there were dozens of 'wood radios' with some of the Cathedrals fetching many hundreds of dollars. One Atwater Kent Model 10 "Breadboard" in immaculate condition – the big one – had a reserve price of \$1100 and didn't sell. There were at least 20 TV sets – from 3 inch ones to 24 inch ones – that sold cheap – mostly 'just haul them away'. This sale had items from 3 different estates and it took a 10x20 foot trailer just to haul those items up to the auction. I didn't see anything I had to have today but did buy a 'project box' and one other item. The total for sales for today was over \$8000. The club adds a 13% premium to the buyer to help pay for the hotel and help out with the budget for the year – for the newsletter, etc. It's the big 'fund raiser' for the year. Things ending about 4pm.

Each year there's a banquet in the evening - \$30/ticket – where they present prizes for 'best in show' for the various categories for the 'display section' of the event. There were 15 categories including 'kit radios', 'military', 'telegraph/keys', pre 1920's wireless, 'wood radios', foreign radios, 'toys', the manufacturer of the year – in this case Firestone, etc. I did win a door prize of an 'rolling cart organizer'. Not bad. Well, afterwards I hit the hay at 10pm and it would be homeward bound the next morning.

Sunday- leaving Houston

I was up early and headed down for breakfast. Apparently a large group had stayed overnight and there was an 'express breakfast' with a half dozen items. Probably 50-60 of them. I wasn't part of the group and the breakfast items were 1/3rd of what was there yesterday. I grabbed some food anyway – famished – and talked to the kindly waitperson – gotta be PC here otherwise it would be a waitress – and asked if this was a 'lower cost' breakfast than the \$15. She said she'd check. Came back and said 'special deal for you - breakfast on the house!'....Hey, that was good! Had some eggs, a piece of fruit, a bowl of oatmeal and one cup decaf and I was off. Checked out and headed east and a bit south to hit the first park. I could run two parks today, then head north and be home by 5pm or so. The weather was going to turn cold and rain moving in shortly so no reason to dawdle in south TX and get clobbered by inches of rain and cold.

First up was Stephen Austin SP. This was officially 'closed' due to flood damage, but with a little bit of county hunter chutzpah, I could pull on the grass about 20 feet into the park and run it off a road parallel to the park border. . Did OK with barely over 44Qs in the log in an early morning run. Whew! Just made it to the magic number of 44. Austin County.

Next up was Lake Somerville - and the part of the park I chose was 'closed' due to flood damage and reconstruction - other than boat launching. I talked to the nice lady ranger and she let me pull into the park past the entrance gate and park in the parking lot just inside for an hour. Did – and got 44+QSOs. Lee County. There also was area after the 'sign' that was probably in the park before you even reached the gate, too. No sweat. I did get bit by a wasp – nasty sting – snuck in the car through the open windows and got me from behind under my arm. Oh well. One of the hazards of park hunting.

Then I headed on home through a few more counties, then hit the I-45 and cruised on home the last 2 1/2 hours arriving home just after 4pm. Ran out and got some groceries and spent the next day typing in the contacts to TQSL and uploading them – over 1000Q for the trip.

Turned out well. Next day the weather front came through. South TX had tornadoes on Tuesday not far from the Houston area – so was wise to bug out when I did. Now ready for the next trip to 'somewhere'.

WWFF – Top Dogs

You may not realize it, but you are likely on the list for 'chasers' if you've been working folks like N9JF, N4CD, AA8R, KA2LHO, and others who have gone out and run state parks this year. (And likely on the list for last year as well – as most of those files are now uploaded to the WWFF database). You don't have to do anything but sit back and enjoy.

From the 2017 stats:

In the top 25 are the following 'chasers'

Top Chasers - in the top 25 for 2017

KA9JAC with 52 parks worked
W0MU with 47 worked
NF0N, W0EAR, with 15
K7SEN, N2JNE with 14
N6PDB with 13

AA8R, N4UP with 12
KB0BA, W6OUL, K4YT, KA2LHO, KA7ICF with 11
NM2L, W4SIG, K1TKL with 10
A whole bunch of county hunters with 9

Top Activators

N4CD with 24/25 parks activated in 2017 (24 with more than 44Q, one just 10 without 44)

N9JF with 1/7

I know Kraig, KA2LHO, and Randy, AA8R each ran at least one – and hopefully they'll get their logs into their regional coordinator to upload so the rest of the folks who worked them get credit!

Unlike NPOTA where chasers had to upload logs and they had to match the activator, WWFF uses only the activators logs. If you are in the activator's log, you'll get credit for the park.

Here's a handy dandy look up for converting KFF numbers to counties! If you missed the spot or the county, but got the park number - here's where to find the county. Note a few parks are in multiple counties like Cooper Lake State Park in TX - depending upon which 'unit' you run.

<http://kk7x.x10.bz/KFF-County.htm>

If you are interested in the WWFF program, check out the following two sites. The first is primarily USA, the second is the worldwide site with LogSearch and other features.

<https://wwff-kff.com/>

and

wwff.co

and no, that's not a typo.....just wwff.co

Interesting Site for Old Mags

If you'd like to peruse old magazines, going back to the 1920s, and including most issues of Popular Electronics, visit

<http://www.americanradiohistory.com/>

Lots of 'nostalgia' at that link

N4CD's Regen Hunt

While at the Houston Vintage Radio Association's Convention, one item came up for sale in the auction and I 'won' it. It's a 'new' retro design radio from the 1920s – a one tube kit using the construction techniques of the '20s – bus bar connections, mostly old parts from the early era, with a few exceptions, and an old design. Coughed up some cash for the 'experience' of building a '20s vintage radio.

You start with a bag of parts – and it's constructed Heathkit step-by-step instructions where you check off each step as you do it – about 11 pages of assembly and maybe 60 parts, screws, terminals, and misc. It took me 90 minutes to finish the main unit. The base board is pre-drilled to accept the wood screws that hold much of the radio parts down. There's a phenolic type front panel that attaches to it and holds the terminals for power, antenna and ground, earphones, etc. Back then it would be Bakelite.

The 'kit' contains an old set of headphones (hi-Z), and a small pre-built well filtered and regulated power supply of 5v at 1/4 amp for the tube filament and 70v at 10ma for the UV201A tube plate supply – also known as an “01A”. That triode tube was the

workhorse of the day – with tens of millions of them made.



The board and parts

There was heavy pre-formed wire to connect it all together after you mounted the parts step by step and 'connected them'. The tube socket, tuning cap, grid leak resistor seem original 1920s, while the 5 turn regen pot, the brass terminal hardware, grid leak capacitor, coil, seem new. Fun to build a 1920s set nearly 100 years later.

Here's the final unit assembled and hooked up. No soldering required.



The folks who make these kits sell them for typically \$250 on Ebay. Naturally, I got it

for a whole, whole lot less.

Back then, if you bought a Crosley or other set (1922 era), it was all #16 type wire connecting the parts – bent at right angles where needed around corners. There was no point-to-point or terminal strips or anything else that came later. Of course, with lots of wire lead, you often didn't get good performance do to the long leads. When you moved your hand toward the tuning controls, you shifted the tuning. This type set took a good outside antenna and a solid ground to hear the typical 50-500w broadcast stations back then. Even today, you don't get much of a signal out of this type radio listening to 5-50KW local stations.

Back then, you used batteries to run it. You'd likely have a 22.5 or 45v battery for the B+, and 3 x 1.5 volt "F" cells – big ones – or a 6v wet cell car type battery you'd get recharged when it ran down in 10 or 20 hours. Less than half the houses in 1922 had electricity, and 'battery eliminators' were twice the cost of a radio!

Well, I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time listening to it, but it was a nice experience building it. It's nice to have a regular table radio with speaker you can use – or the car radio. Not much on AM these days other than talk radio (Rush Limbaugh, Hannity, Mark Levin) and sports it seems. Oh, and lots of ads!

Added it to the regen collection.

On the Road with N4CD III

Another weekend came along, so I figured I'd take a day trip up to OK for some parks and counties. Saturday was going to be OK but the weather forecaster said watch out for Sunday – rain, gloom, then t-storms in the evening. OK – one day trip up the road a bit.



First up was the Hagerman Natural Wildlife Refuge in TX. Never heard of it before Parks on the Air – but it had a designator number and I could find a web site for it – so it was up RT 75 to Sherman TX then some smaller roads. It seems Hagerman, 110 years ago, was a small down along the Red River in the fertile flood plain – a couple hundred people spread out over miles. Along comes the government who wants to create giant Lake Texoma as a reservoir and power generator, and Hagerman gets 'evacuated' and eliminated from the map, and is now at the bottom of the lake. However, the name stuck. In the second half of the 20th century, the feds created many 'wildlife refuges' and Hagerman was one – along the Red River on the TX side. There's a visitor center there explaining their mission and pointing out what you can see there. Pulled in and made 60+ contacts from there in Grayson County – not rare for sure but you never know with folks starting over, on new awards, etc. I appreciate the county hunter contacts even if dupes. To get the park 'officially activated' you need to have at least 44 contacts. You do get credit for an activation with just 10 for your own record. The ARRL DX contest was going on – it made a mess of 14.0565 so I had to resort to 14.113 for cw – and it worked OK. I could spot.

There were a bunch of people wandering there – on hikes on at least half a dozen trails. The weather was total overcast but in the 60s – good day for a hike.

I did work Henri – OH3JF – in the contest – he was using different call – but recognized mine! One of the European county hunters!

Stayed about an hour and a half then headed toward the next one in OK.

The trip wound up through Bryan OK – then over to Johnston County for the Tishomingo NWR – another place for nature lovers – 25 square miles. Hiking paths – observation areas. All sorts of birds to 'spot'.



Fishing – bird watching – and some of these parks actually have hunting seasons for specific game! It's on a northern 'arm' of Lake Texoma – most of which is a lot further south. This park is named for a Chickasaw Chief – and the nearby town is also named Tishomingo.

It was midday – propagation slump - and I struggled to get my 44. finished with just 46Q – whew! And had to work at that, too – catching some DX stations in the contest – but EU signals were way down in the noise at that time of day. I had run these counties a few weeks ago – so there wasn't much 'demand' for them from county hunters to bring out the troops, but I do appreciate the contacts even if you don't need them (or bother to log them). They count for me. When I hit a park, I'm working to 'officially activate it' with the magic number of 44 or more QSOs. I'll get credit myself at 10 or more, but, heck, as an experienced mobile, you've got to set some goals – and one of mine is to always try to get at least 44 – and you can count all the contacts on different bands – so

if W6OUL works me on 40 and 30 and 20 cw that is 3. If he calls on 20 SSB, that is a 4th that counts. So feel free to work the guys and gals in parks on as many bands as you can – helps them out! Ray, WB0PYF was out mobile – had some RF problems and later went QRT about this time on his way back home.

There was still lots of time – it was about the same distance going west to I-35 vs winding my way back over to RT 75 – the way I came. Being a county hunter, there is little incentive to repeat counties – no one needs them any longer! So it was off west to Lake Murray State Park. I'd hit it then zip on home. It's in Carter County (on the I-35) that I ran not long ago. Oh well, maybe I'd get my 44Q anyway.



This is a very nice OK state park – with cabins, lodges, ATV trails, boating, camping, fishing, hiking, etc. It's a nice size lake and Oklahoma's largest state park. Well, wasn't going to do any of those other than pull in, find a parking spot, run the county/park and depart to home!

Found a nice spot inside the 'east' entrance off route 70 as I headed west – and managed to make over 44Qs, winding up with 63 QSOs, including half a dozen DX stations I chased at the end just for heck of it. I upload the park runs to LoTW as well as the WWFF database. Maybe I worked a 'country' for mobile DXCC? I've got a long way to go- I don't spend much time chasing the DX – hi hi.

The sun finally peeked out – became a nicer day – with sun – and 70 in OK. I 'de-parked' for home which was 2 hours away.

I ran Love County – got a few contacts. Later I hollered away on 30m cw for over five minutes with zero contacts. Not a one. Went off and chased a DX station to have 'one contact' in the log. Now with 'self credit' there are over 100 counties in TX that I need – so I'll be running them and hoping someone somewhere gives me at least one CW contact.

When I reached the home town – filled up the car with gas at the local Kroger Station – 9.5 for 275 miles and a couple hours of engine idling. 3 parks put out and six counties. No admission charges at any of the parks today. Thanks for riding along.

More trips planned!

South Carolina Qso Party

This year was very good. Dave, WN4AFP and the SC group got LOTS of stations on the air and probably all the counties were on. Excellent turnout. Conditions were – well, typical for the sunspot season. Still, many many QSOs made.

From the 3830 reflector:

N4CD mobile 894Q CW

N4CW operating, W4TMO driving, navigating, and strategizing...it's what we do best! We put 24 counties on the air, mobile CW, using a KX3 and KXPA100, powered by two 50 Amp Hr batteries.

Outstanding number of repeat (different county) Q's: W0BH (23), OM2VL (20),

DL3DXX (17), K1RO (13). Most stations worked us more than once! Thank you for your patience. The biggest difficulty is line noise from power lines along the road; most of the time the noise was between S7 and S9. So I really appreciate the many who tolerated my repeatedly asking for repeats. Thanks to all and the SCQP folks that put this event on.

WW4SF/N4IQ 286 cw 30 ssb

Bamberg, Hampton, Allendale and Colleton Counties. Phil had rig problems with his SSB set up. Great fun and enjoyed the outdoors adventure. Hope we gave everyone a chance at some of the more rare counties. Bill (N4IQ) and Phil (AC4Q)

KN4Y fixed FL - 41 cw 23 mults

The number of mobiles on CW did not materialize as advertised, guess many of the mobile operated only sideband. Conditions were good here only on 40 meters with a short jaunt on 80 meters. South Carolina disappeared the last hour. Worked the bonus mobiles. Good hype.

K4BAI - fixed GA 29 cw 30 ssb 40mults

Fair activity. Good conditions on 40 and 80.

North Carolina QSO Party

I did not hear as much activity – but conditions seemed poorer – at least for me. N4CW and several other mobiles including K5CM were out. I suspect a lot of the action was on 40 and 80 as stations tried to work each other.

From the 3830 reflector:

KN4Y - FL 70Q CQ 38 mults

"Found the Carolina's CW operators, they are in the North. What a fun QSO party, worked all the bonus stations for a change, had one contact on 20 meters, most activity on 40 meters and later 80 meters. All this fun even with a late start after church and time out for wife chow down. Good signals."

K4BAI - fixed GA 53 cw 47 ssb 57 Mults

Very good activity. Good conditions on 40 until it began to go long. 80 was good too.

K1RO - NH - 138 cw 193 ssb 90 mults

This is the first time I have operated this contest seriously, and I was impressed with the turnout from North Carolina. Unlike the SCQP the day before, I'm a little too close to North Carolina for 20 meters. I had good propagation to the far western counties but that was it. For me 40 meters was the real workhorse and I spent most of the day alternating between CW and SSB. 80 meters was excellent for the last couple of hours.

I enjoyed chasing the mobiles and expeditions and had 26 QSOs with N4CW, 15 with K5CM, 12 with K3TD, 5 with AA4XX, and 3 with K2JB. I also worked several fixed stations on a number of bands and modes.

N1CC - fixed TX 61 cw 88 ssb 62 mults

Glad I decided to run 100W instead of QRP. This was harder this year than last given the prevailing radio conditions. Took 8 Hours, 2 more than last year to arrive at about the same score. Got more counties than last year.

Did a lot of CQ calling on 20M SSB to generate contacts. Analysis indicates that Elmers need to teach newbies, and remind oldies what a "Directional Call" means. MY CQ included "North Carolina Stations Only" I worked 78 stations, and had 31 additional stations, outside North Carolina call in. That had to cut down my ability to work more stations, and I usually just told them NIL on the Log you are not in the directional CQ intended. Some insisted on an explanation. That is up to the Elmers and Local Clubs to teach these folk proper operating. If you are not in North Carolina, do not call a station that is saying "North Carolina Only" for heaven's sake.

Had three instances of jamming, they all went away and are on the MP3 should the contest committee want to listen to the voices and see if they know who the offenders are. Routinely I supply MP3 once a year to FCC, knowing full well they do not have staff or time to go after Jammers.

Sure hope for better conditions next season! See ya then!

On the Road with N4CD IV

The call of the panhandle came. Over the past 20 years, N4CD used to run the panhandle twice a year to give out the counties, usually over a 3 day holiday weekend. Well, I haven't done that for a while, so it was time to do it again. This year I'm also into activating the State Parks and the federal National Wildlife Refuges - so I'd combine both and in slower than warp speed run around the sparsely populated counties of NW Texas.

As of mid February, new rules for MARAC Awards went into effect – where you could claim self credit for 14 different awards. The only one that was of interest was Nth time USACW- that and the Double Diamond which already has provisions for self credit. Checking my coloring book, it seems I need over 100 TX counties myself, so this would

be a bonus run. I needed most along the route! As long as I worked ONE station on HF from the counties I need, I'd get credit. Now, some are likely to just do it 'the old fashioned way' and that is fine, too. Just like some folks don't take relays as their standard operating habit, others do. To each his own. Since I zip through a lot of counties, I could plan to hit those I needed too. Serendipity. I might finish next time before the sunspot cycle peaks again!

Thursday

Taking off on a Thursday at sunrise, the car headed up route 287 to the Northwest – but now I could zig and zag a bit. No hurry to get the trip done in 3 days and, of course, if you go to the parks, usually not right on the route, and sit for an hour or two, it eats up time. Hey, this was to be a fun trip. In my younger days, I'd be off at 6am, drive till 7pm, and make it over to Dallam county 600 miles later to catch a motel and have a late dinner. That trip would include sitting on a bunch of county lines, too, eating up time.

Not this trip. I putt along a bit slower and don't fly through the two lane roads with no paved shoulders at 80 mph these days. Heh heh. 70 likely. The speed limit now is 75 mph – it used to be 70. It's almost a bit scary when you realize that two cars passing each other, with just a couple feet between them – means the combined speed is 150 mph.....not much margin for error. You don't want to be distracted and wander down the road! Fortunately, on most of these roads, you see another car every 15 or 20 miles most of the time. It's very lonely in the top part of the panhandle on the '4 digit' roads with little and sometimes no other traffic. The main roads are busier, but don't hit the county lines or get within miles of them. Even better, since I've been doing this for 20+ years, I know which lines work and which ones you want to avoid due to horrendous power line QRN. It's still lots and lots of miles and don't expect too many gas stations or 'rest stops' if you have a YL along. You can go 200 miles without a gas station or convenience store up here, and even if there are places to buy gas, most are 'co-op' where you need to belong and use a special access card to get gas - and no rest room facilities or attendant.

First up was the first park in Clay County TX – Lake Arrowhead. 10 mile detour off very busy 287 – the main route from Dallas to Amarillo and points west. Nice park. Got my 44 plus QSOs for an official park activation – which is the goal. There are quite a few DX stations chasing US parks including SA2CLU, ON4VT, ON7NQ, ON4ON, DL1EBR, DL6KVA, ON5SY, F1BLL, IK1GPG, and several others at times. It's not easy working TX to EU. Bob, N8KIE, was in HI and caught me in many counties and parks after about noon TX time (sunrise in HI). As usual, I'd wait till I get to the park to

run the county for the county hunters – otherwise most would not work me again in the park – hi hi. Took a while, but the weather was good. Temps were in the 80s! Things were going to change. The wind was blowing HARD from the south at 30-40 mph and a cold front was headed my way. A very cold cold front.

Lake Arrowhead has swimming, boating, paths for horseback riding, a few camp sites, water skiing, and ranger programs. Well, the water temp is in the 50s, so no swimmers, but good times for boaters and hikers. You can borrow tackle from the HQ building to go fishing. Didn't stick around – too many parks and counties waiting.

N4CD was back on the highway up through Archer and Wichita through Wilbarger . Foard, and Hardeman. There's another state park there in Hardeman - Copper Breaks State Park – KFF-3001. I pulled in and worked the county hunters and park hunters. A few more DX went into the log including 9A3NM, 9A1DX, S55N, and 9A7W. Nice to be hunted by the DX. If you set up a dipole or other larger antenna, you'd probably get even more. I just run mobile with my six foot mast on the trunk deck, resonators horizontal.

This park has swimming and boating, fishing, kite flying, backpacking, camp sites for RVs and tents, and contains some of the official Texas Longhorn herd. Did my thing, didn't do too much sightseeing, and headed further west.

Occasionally I'd zip on down to 40M SSB – had a separate hamstick on a 3 magnet mount (5 inch magnets) on top of the car. Did 44+ QSO so I was happy I got the park activated. 10 contacts is enough for a personal activation. The usual list of CH went into the log. After the run at the park and getting back on 287, I took a short detour a bit later down to the Childress/Cottle line – a 8 mile or or detour. First time I ever had to the time to do it.

As I was zipping along at 75 mph headed south (the speed limit) with a STRONG south wind of 30-50 mph, I heard a bang and scraping sound. Hmm...the mag mount on top of the car came off and was dangling by the coax on the right side of the car – with the antenna scraping the ground. I pulled over quick. I had to fight to get the door open against the wind. It was screaming out of the south. I surveyed the 'damage'. A small scrap spot on the side of car – antenna seemed intact – put mag mount back on roof, got back in car, checked antenna and it seemed to be working.....and proceeded at 50 mph the rest of the way to the line a few miles further. First time I've every had that happen! Ran the line, they headed on in to Childress to the Super 8 motel there. Only 289 miles today but lots of contacts and extra counties. Normally I'm in Childress by noon, stop for

gas and a sandwich, and head on another 300 miles on the old 'zip around the panhandle in 3 days type trips'. Dinner at the K-Bobs Steak House. Had grilled chicken and their good salad bar. This is a chain restaurant. Slept well.

Friday

Day two arrives and this is only a county hunting day – no parks. Whoa – it's cold outside! Hmmm....back to the old routine. Did the usual stops on C/Ls around the panhandle – two by two – all the way over to Dallam, then zipped on down into Amarillo (Potter County) for the night at the Super 8 Central motel. Did miss PA3ARM – he needed Hutchinson and there just wasn't enough propagation. Someone else head to Hutchinson earlier in the day. Bob, N8KIE, was working me from HI after noon local time. The DX was limited to the county hunters – DL3DXX, DL6KVA, sometimes IK0MHZ, and a few times PA3ARM. Henri, OH3JF was in there a few times on the trip, too! K5GE, Gene, was around to give me the DD credit in most. It's going to be a long time before anyone finishes up for Double Diamond.

That night in Amarillo I went to the Big Texan Steak House. You'll see signs for it 200 miles away – just like Wall Drugs Super Store in South Dakota. Their deal is 'free 72oz steak'– if you can finish it and the 'fixins' in one hour or less. The fixins include a couple pounds of french fries and a pound or two of salad. That's six pounds of steak! A few brave souls try it every week. Even fewer brave souls manage to get it all down and keep it down. Otherwise, it's about \$75 for the dinner (and you can take home what you can't eat in your doggie bag). Didn't try that. Just had a small 10oz steak – good – for \$15. Slept well. You can stay at the motel here – and bring your horse....they've got facilities for overnight visits for you and your horse. How about that?

Often, if there is no internet at a park, there is usually free wi-fi at the entrance station and at the visitor center – if there is one. Sometimes not. As you all know, if you don't self spot or get spotted, you can call for hours and not get more than 1 or 2 contacts - sometimes none at all. If you are activating parks, keep that in mind. There's usually a small parking lot just after the entrance facility – where you can try to get their wi-fi. Seems to be there most places and sometimes there is wi-fi in the campgrounds as well. Guess most families need wi-fi to keep the kids happy these days – otherwise they go through severe 'withdrawal symptoms' with 'failure to connect'. Hi Hi.

Saturday

Day three arrives and now its time again for a couple parks. Twenty degrees outside. Brrr. First on down to Palo Duro State park in Randall County. Palo Duro is the

second largest canyon system in the US – stretching 150 miles. It's only 800 feet deep so it doesn't match the Grand Canyon – yet it's pretty spectacular itself. You can camp way down in the canyon here. Norm, N9MM was here camping for a couple days. He set up his antenna by the entrance facility up at the top where he could get wi-fi. There was wi-fi at the camp ground but it was down, down, down in the canyon and not a good radio location. He didn't seem to be operating early, so I fired up in the parking lot where I could self spot. Later, he'd get active – we didn't co-exist too well, so I headed down the road 2 miles and ran without internet. Not so good then. When I left we had an eyeball – and also worked each other park-to-park for credit for each of us. 20M cw and SSB at 200 feet. He runs a KX3 and amp with a ground mounted vertical and radials.

I've crossed the canyon on the main highway north south many times but this was the first visit to the state park for me. I'm seeing things I missed on many county hunting trips. Of course, it was 25 miles off the 'main route' so that's why.

Did my 44+ Qs – and left after 1 1/2 hours. More parks to run. Norm, N9MM, finished with over 280Q after two or three days and lots of hours.

About 30 miles west, but still in Randall County is Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Pulled in, spent an hour and half there and did my 44 plus Qs. Thanks for the county hunters who worked me again in the same county but a different park! The SC QSO party was going on and I caught a few of them. Needed a bunch in SC.

This refuge is one for 'short grass' prairie, black-tailed prairie dogs, and burrowing owls. 7700 acres or so. Great if you're a nature lover and bird spotter/watcher.

In all of these counties, I needed a Double Diamond contact. That means a QSO with Bob, N8KIE, Terry, WQ7A, or Gene, K5GE, the only active Mobile Diamond award holders. (2 others earned MD – Joyce, N9STL, no longer active, and Scottie, N4AAT, now SK). In most of the needed ones, I caught one or more of them. A few I missed. Guess in a year or two it will be time for another trip to clean up needs. Maybe we'll get another Mobile Diamond holder and a few more Master Platinum holders as more mobiles have incentive to go out and run counties.

Did my thing here then it was off two by two over to Bailey County and the Muleshoe NWR out in the middle of nowhere. I mean nowhere. Miles and miles of highway with nothing in sight. Sat in the park entrance inside the gate for 1 1/2 hours. Only 2 cars passed by on the main road. None came or went from the NWR. Not a one. Of course, no internet here with a population density of 0.01 people per square mile and no homes

within 10 miles. I managed to get spotted by one of the park hunters so that brought about some attention. When I went through a town 20 miles earlier, I did post a note on the Facebook POTA page - "look for me in 20 min from Muleshoe KFF 0552 – 14041, 10121, 7041"....and folks did. Whew. Had a good run. Not even the regular cellphone had a signal here.

This is one of a few areas of preserved High Plains 'shortgrass'. Lots of wildlife here and migratory birds. Sandhill cranes, scaled quails and others by the gazillion. It's got one of the largest duck banding programs in the country. Pheasants and lots of other birds to watch. Just ran the radio, looked out the window while I ran, had the windows down most of the time, and enjoyed nature – while working stations on the radio.

My car likes to sit at 12.6v battery voltage when the temp outside is above 70. Below that, it sits in the 13.5v range and if it is really cold, like the mornings on this trip where it was 20, it's up at 15v. However, if you turn on the headlights and turn up the fan motor a bit, within a minute it will go up and sit in the 13.5-14v range and the radio is quite happy there at that voltage. At 12.6v or below, it starts to chirp on cw. So...I just have to remember to turn on the headlights about a minute before I'm going to run the county! The Malibu has a digital voltmeter you can select as part of the multi-function display! It took me a while to figure out this fix.

Ran a few more counties after that and headed on into to Lubbock, TX (Lubbock County) to a Super 8 Motel – south. Nice 3 story deal – new I think. Zipped a mile away to a China Star Buffet – excellent. Slept well.

Sunday

Time to start winding my way back east toward home. So I head north for 4 counties before turning east toward another park – this one Caprock State Park – which is actually park on the canyon for Palo Duro - and where the Buffalo hang out. Hundreds and hundreds of them here – it's their park and they wander wherever they like in the park. There's internet at the visitor center – so I sat in their lot where I could self spot and ran the park. Otherwise, no public over the air internet. Briscoe County – out in the boonies 10 miles from town – and animals don't need internet. Did my thing and put 44+Q in the log. Most of the time I'd get 55-75 QSOs at the parks between 20/30/40cw and 20SSB and occasionally a few on 40m SSB.

Today the NC state QSO Party was going on so I'd listen for them. There was lots of SC QSO stations and two mobiles I heard well on CW on Saturday. Not so many in the NC

one on Sunday and most were tough copy. N4CW ran both - good sig and good ears. K5CM was on in NC. After the park, it was south and east – zig and zag toward home. Maybe I was getting out of best skip zone? 20M these days can be 'long' and doesn't appear till 9-9:30AM local time and fades away by 3:30 local time most days. 30M would be great – but not for any 'contests'.

I ran out of time and was passing through Haskell County and the town of Haskell and spied at nice motel a bit after 4pm. There's not a whole lot of motels out this way. Next up was Knox and there was only one tiny place in Munday 35 miles ahead and the only place to eat was the DQ. That didn't seem too exciting. So I stopped a bit early at an AmeriStay Motel. Nice. Not many places to eat on Sunday night either here but decided to get a small pizza at a pizza counter/deli at the large local food store – and they had a salad bar (\$4.95/lb) so did both. Good. Hit the spot. Slept well.

I had run a dozen counties and the one park that day.

Monday

If I watched by schedule, I could make it home before the rush hour – which you want to avoid since I'd be coming in from the west and have to cross 50 miles of the “Metropolplex” with 3 million people and 3 million cars. So bright and early it was up to Knox/Baylor county line on a small road – worked nicely – then back down across into Throckmorton when the fog hit. The temp was up to 70 again – after freezing cold in the panhandle for 3 days never getting above 50. Wow – 40 miles of fog – slowed me down a bit – 300 foot visibility. One or two power line power poles visible...others further down the road - lost in the fog. Not great. Then the fog lifted but it was 100% humidity and low ceiling for the rest of the day. Warm.

The route followed windy twisting roads through Young, Stephens, to the next park – Possum Kingdom State Park in Palo Pinto County. Still made good time. The GPS lady picked the shortest route and it hit the most counties.

This park was built by the CCC boys back in the 1930s/40s – a 'make work' program during the Great Depression. You have all sorts of water and land adventures, and even scuba diving and snorkeling – and 300 miles of shoreline here. Camping, cabins, etc. One of the nicer lakes in TX – cold, deep, clear.

I just sat inside the entrance and ran the county. Internet came and went there – you've have to watch the RF strength indicator, and hit 'spot' when you had it and hope it would go through. Worked half the time. Did get contacts to make the 44Q magic number

including the usual county hunters.

OK – back through Stephens – ran it – then down to a new state park – so new it really isn't open yet to the public. Palo Pinto Mountains State Park about 10 miles north of I-20. The state acquired the land in 2011 and is awaiting funding to develop it. They sold one small state park in Ft Worth to get the funds for this much larger one. I headed on down there – there's a ranger station – and you can park a bit later 'on park property' at a gated entrance – that was closed – but recessed enough so you're on park property when you park there. This was a repeat of Palo Pinto County – most CH didn't need it but a few, thank goodness, worked me. No internet. Worked hard to get to the magic 44Q....barely made it with 46Q after an hour – and I had to get moving if I wanted to get home that day. I had to hit Ft Worth (Tarrant County) before 3pm. After that, you can sit for hours in rush hour stop and go, accident prone traffic for the next 50 miles.

Headed out, hit I-20, ran the counties along it – including Tarrant – with six lanes of highway and zillions of cars, then ran the last hour just driving in fairly heavy traffic that was moving well. Home by 3:30pm.

1,530 miles in five days – 8 parks – over 40 counties run. Lots of fun and decent weather - that started out warm, turned freezing cold with 20 degrees but clear in the panhandle, then back up to the 70s as I headed home. I missed the hail and wind in my home area – 1 inch hail 7 miles from the house and lots of wind. Tornado watch in effect. 100% humidity and 70s. Wow...well, inside the car it was 70 deg all the time – hi hi. No snow – no ice, no rain, no wildfires – although they were fighting them out in the panhandle area while I was there with the high wind and 8% humidity levels. TX is a big place – lots of 'weather'. Lucked out on the weather. Soon it will be 'spring time' with severe storms and tornadoes – especially out west in the panhandle in 'tornado alley'. And up in OK.

A few other mobiles were out. N4UP was very busy in SC. Barry N0KV, headed south for NM for a few days. K0FG headed north through TX toward the end. Jim, N9JF was running some parks in IL. With the SC and NC QSO, there was lots of CW action to keep county hunters by the radio. Hope you caught what you needed.

See you next trip

de N4CD

N9JF runs Parks

Jim, N9JF, has been busy enjoying the state parks in IL. He ran one and posted a note about a mis-adventure:

“N9JF: "The "rest of the story": I was not thrilled with the response, though I did get 50 contacts which "ain't bad". However, when I took down the dipole, I found that one side was disconnected from the balun. Duh. That might also explain why I was getting "bitten" from the paddles and having RF problems. Double-duh..... It was making Ringo's hair stand on end, which was a bit odd....."

By the way, it could not have been a more perfect day, weather-wise. Sixty-five degrees, sunny, no wind, no mosquitoes. Bird highlights were Pileated Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, a smattering of "puddle ducks": American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall.”



Awards Issued

USA-CW IV #13

KC3X, Hollis

2/9/2017

Upcoming Events for County Hunters

March 11 1400z to 12 2000z
Oklahoma QSO Party
RS(T), county or SPC
k5cm.com/okqp.htm

March 11 1900z to 12 1900z
Idaho QSO Party
RS(T), county or SPC
idahoarrrl.info/qsoparty

March 12 1800z to 13 0100z
Wisconsin QSO Party
County or SPC
www.warac.org/wqp

March 18 1400z to 19 0200z
Louisiana QSO Party
RS(T) Parish or SPC

<http://laqp.louisianacontestclub.org/>

March 18 1400z to 19 2359z

Virginia QSO Party

Serial, county or SPC

www.qsl.net/sterling

Sign up or save the dates!

MICHIGAN MINI - April 27, 28, 29

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

Dayton Hamvention May 19-21 – Greene County Fairgrounds, Xenia OH

more details here: <http://hamvention.org/>

Note: As of press time – there is no word on a county hunter forum. There will not be a county hunter dinner likely on Friday night. The logistics are likely too complicated this first year at the new location about 15 miles from Dayton and about 20 miles from the Golden Corral – at 'rush hour' – so we'll skip it this year formally. Some will still likely head there for dinner anyway. Stay tuned for more information as it develops. There are just a few motels in Xenia so most folks will be staying in Dayton and heading the 15 miles east to Xenia. Most of the DX dinners and club get togethers and such will still be at the same locations, including the Four Days in May QRP event.

MARAC Annual Convention - Sept 25, 26, 29 Colorado Springs – hosted by Barry, N0KV and Pat, N0DXE

details here <http://www.marac.org/2017national.htm>

That's all this month! De N4CD

