

County Hunter News

March 1, 2006

Volume 2, Issue 3

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

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

The County Hunter News will attempt to provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, or provide news of upcoming events.

We hope you will enjoy the new County Hunter News. Feel free to forward, or provide links. Permission is given for copying or quoting in part or all (except to MARAC, Inc, or Officers/Directors of MARAC), provided credit is given.

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@prodigy.net)

Notes from the Editor

In this issue, we address some of the 'concerns' that have been addressed to us about 'peak oil'. About the only way to cut your costs now is to take steps to use less oil/natural gas. In this issue, we include some information on new car technology and new house construction technology. Also info on 60m spots, trips by several county hunters, and update on 3556.5, and whatever else came across the editor's desk and mind to include!

Just for the heck of it, I checked the spots for the 60m SSB only band. So far, to date, there is exactly one! Kent, KL1V, ran 3rd District AK on 60M, and it was spotted by W6RK! Now to see when the second spot shows up! No CW allowed on 60M yet, but there is always hope that more frequencies and modes will be added in the future.

Supposedly, modifying the IC706 to operate on 60m takes only clipping a diode inside the radio. Has anyone done this and had success? If you run a screwdriver antenna, you should be all set to try some 60m county hunting. Rather than listen to the SSB folks complain about 'rotten 20M propagation' and "nothing by foreign broadcasts on 40M SSB", maybe those SSB folks will try something different? The CW folks first added 30 meters, and now are using 3556.5 as well.

Maybe someone who is on 60m can give a presentation at the Minis or at the National Convention, and let us know about the band???? With the sunspots still headed down, now is the time to try it!

Here's a question for the MARAC Awards Chairman. It seems that certain awards get announced on the air and published on the Forums (K3IMC, KK7X). Some don't. It doesn't seem to be consistent.

Now, for USACA, and nth time up to 5th, Master's Gold, and for Bingo, it is important to announce them so folks can update their computers – to get the right credit for working that mobile/fixed station. If they don't, they won't receive credit for the right number of stars, or for Master's Gold or Master Platinum. The 'going through the numbers routine' that you hear on the SSB net, for those without computer access, helps keep their database up to date. I've heard that the new MARAC Logger program will automatically update itself with the latest awards if you are connected to the internet. No need to manually type things in, and possibly make errors in the data entry.

For example, once a mobile gets a star, it counts toward your Bingo awards, and toward your Five Star award. You need that new award and the date of award in your database to get credit if you work that mobile after that date. Same for stars up to 5. Once a mobile gets Master's Gold, it makes a difference since now everyone can work that mobile for Master's Platinum. If you are working on MG, you need to know who has their Bingo already.

Often, folks will check first whether they need the mobile before adding to the QRM pile by calling. If they don't need it, they won't add to the pile up on frequency. Some work everyone every time.

Additionally, if you go out mobile, and have your Bingo, and work someone good for Bingo either fixed or mobile, you get credit yourself toward your MG from the county you are in. For MP, if you already have your MG, working someone else gives you credit for that county (plus his).

There are other awards that don't have to be entered into the computer databases. Included would be Bingo II, Bingo III, Bingo IV, Bingo N, 6th time, 7th time, 8th time, 9th time, umpteenth time. And Big Rig, all YL, Team Award, Prefixes, USACW, Five Star, etc. Having Bingo II doesn't make you more valuable as a mobile, nor as a fixed station. Same for Five Star. No need to update your database with those. And likely no place to put that info, either!

Of course, getting Five Star, all one prefix, or USACW is a challenge. Same for working the umpteenth time. After 5 stars, it is a challenge to finish again, but doesn't make you any more valuable as a mobile, and the computer only tracks up to five stars in a county, so more is overkill for the database. People like recognition for the awards they earn.

Now the question – you see announcements for Bingo II, Bingo III, Bingo IV, and Five Star, and >5th time, but have you ever seen announcements for USACW, USACW II, USACW III? Are the CW folks being discriminated against? Have we been left out? It seems inconsistent. The Prefix awards, 5 star, after 5th time get announced.

Some non-data base required awards are announced, others aren't. As one can tell from Elwood's annual summary, which appeared in the Feb issue of the CHNews, a large number of county hunters are working toward USACW and beyond. There's been more activity on CW than in years with 30M added in. Folks get their USACW and no announcement is made. Maybe it should be?

Helpful hint: If you finish up your USACA, endorsed all CW, you should immediately (and simultaneously) file an application for USACW. In the past, Elwood would automatically credit you for having worked all counties CW in his database. Now that MARAC has taken

over the USACW award, you must apply for it separately, with the necessary fee, to obtain it. Without getting it, you cannot get USACWII.

The same is true if you start again toward a 2nd time – you can be working on USACW from the same date if you get them both at the same time (or about at the same time within a few days).

Dayton Hamvention – the County Hunter Forum will be Friday afternoon from 2:15 to 3:45 this year. Forum Chairman Todd, N2TUN, advised that we are ‘confirmed’ for this timeslot. See you at the hamvention which is May 19, 20, 21. see <http://www.hamvention.org/> for more details on the hamfest. Usually after the Friday afternoon activities, many County Hunters Meet at the Ryan’s Buffet for dinner.

There were several QSO parties in February – some good, some with very little activity, as well as the ARRL CW DX contest where some of the HI and AK counties appeared and were spotted and worked by those needing them.

Several more counties were removed from the ‘never spotted’ category on 30M, leaving just a handful never spotted for activity.

More on Peak Oil

Peak Oil News from India: from
<http://www.indiaonline.com/news/news.asp?dat=75071>

“Crude oil production registered a negative growth of 8.1% in December compared to (-) 0.6% in December a year earlier. Crude oil output shrank by 5.9% in the first nine months of FY06 compared to 2.8% in the same period of 2004-05.

I just love how they talk about ‘negative growth’. Their output of oil declined by over 8%, which means they have to import more and more. And there are at least twice as many of them as folks in the USA. Their economy is on a roll. For example, refinery output grew by 8% (more cars and more

oil imports!), Cement production grew over 10% annually. Steel production is up 10%. That needs lots of energy for cement and steel.

If you saw the State of the Union Address on February 1, 2006, you would note that the President made some interesting remarks about energy. We'll see if any/much of what he said comes to pass. In reality, we import only about 1 million barrels of oil from the Middle East now. Of course, in the event of a Middle East cutoff, the sources where we get our oil would divert some of what they have to Europe and Asia, so we would be short as well. Coming up with a substitute for 1 million bbl/day is not that hard. But we import over 60% of our daily needs for 20 million barrels a day! (that is 840 million gallons!). By 2025, we'll be importing at least 5 million (in the USGS dream) bbl of oil from the Middle East – with the problem likely being they don't have the capacity to deliver it – or any more than what they are doing today.

It seems strange that some are getting 'agitated' over higher profits at oil companies. If you look at the numbers, Exxon Mobil and the other major oil companies make about 10 cents profit on each dollar of revenue. To put that in perspective, that is about average for the large corporations in the world. The drug companies make 20c profit on each dollar, and Microsoft makes 33 cents profit on each dollar. Over the next 15 years, the major oil companies will have to invest over a TRILLION dollars to meet our energy needs. They won't raise that amount of capital if there is no return on investment for the investors. They sell more oil for those gas guzzlers, they make more money, plain and simple. There are more and more of them each year, driven more and more miles.

If you want to buy stock in a losing company, buy Ford or GM or any airline except Southwest. You stand a good chance of losing not only all future earnings (upon which the value of the stock is based) but also all your invested money as they head toward possible bankruptcy. The ability to raise future capital is critical to having energy available.

More Peak Oil News from Mexico:

From the Yahoo CWEI boards:

“An internal study reviewed by The Wall Street Journal shows water and gas are encroaching more quickly than expected in Cantarell, Mexico's biggest oil field, and might cause output to drop precipitously over the next few years.

Currently, Cantarell produces 2 mln barrels of oil a day, or six of every 10 barrels produced by Mexico, and is the world's second-biggest-producing field after Saudi Arabia's Ghawar.

Pemex says it is confident it can make up for any decline at Cantarell by squeezing more output from other fields, but some analysts outside the company are far less sanguine. The study was carried out last year by Pemex experts.

'I am confident in Pemex's portfolio of assets. Other fields will be able to substitute (Cantarell's output) and increase production,' Juan Jose Suarez Coppel, the company's chief financial officer, said in an interview.

Pemex predicts Mexico's output will actually grow this year to 3.42 mln barrels a day from 3.33 mln barrels last year.

But the study already prompted the company in December to predict a slightly sharper decline at Cantarell than its previous forecasts -- with output down 6 pct this year to an average rate of 1.9 mln barrels a day and off to 1.43 mln barrels as an average for 2008. That prediction now roughly matches the study's most optimistic scenario.”

From the site www.oilcast.com, we find from an interview with a Pemex engineer that:

- 1) Cantarell accounts for 63% of Mexico's output
 - 2) The estimated recoverable oil was 16 billion barrels. 11 billion have been removed so far
 - 3) Cantarell is a “carbonate field” and will likely show a 10-15% annual decline shortly
 - 4) A similar field, Abkatum, is now showing an annual 20% drop per year!
 - 5) Estimates show a 10% drop this year, and up to 20% next year and thereafter
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Things are not looking good for Mexico's ability to even maintain oil output. It's internal consumption rises each year as more and more cars are added to the roads. Mexico ships a LOT of oil to the USA. What happens when they no longer have as much for export? \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Oil Trivia: "The world's oldest continuously operated oil well, located south of Titusville and known as the McClintock No. 1, was drilled in 1861. When the original operators kicked it down, the records are that this well produced about 50 barrels of oil per day. That was not a lot of oil by comparison even back then, when some Titusville wells produced upward of 5,000 barrels in a day. But after 145 years, the McClintock No. 1 still produces a small amount of light green, Pennsylvania-grade crude oil, in the range of about one valuable barrel per day. "

(Source:<http://p088.ezboard.com/fdownstreamventurespetroleummarkets.showMessage?topicID=16288.topic>)

Hydraulic Hybrids

OK.....likely few of the county hunters have heard of a hydraulic hybrid car!.....Me either, until two weeks ago, when I ran across an interesting article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051218/AUTO01/512180348/1148>

Oh, and did you know when the first electric/gasoline engine car was actually produced?

So what is a hydraulic hybrid and should you be interested in maybe buying one in the future? Will it make county hunting more affordable for mobiles?

“EPA officials say a technology patented by the agency and dubbed the hydraulic hybrid system could give U.S. manufacturers an edge with increasingly fuel-conscious car consumers.

The system uses hydraulic pressure to recapture energy lost through braking, then releases the pressure during acceleration. The EPA estimates hydraulic hybrids could improve fuel economy up to 55 percent, versus 30 percent to 40 percent for a conventional gas-electric hybrid.

The EPA believes in some ways, hydraulic hybrids will be superior to gasoline-electric hybrids, such as the Toyota Prius and Ford Escape Hybrid. One big advantage: they cost less, meaning consumers will see a more immediate financial payoff.”

“As Johnson sat behind the wheel of the Expedition, agency officials said the hydraulic hybrid version would get 32 mpg in city driving and 22 mpg on the highway. The conventional gasoline-only Expedition averages 13 mpg in the city and 20 mpg on the highway.

The cost of the hydraulic system -- about \$1,000 -- would be paid back in nine months of driving, officials said.

The EPA is working on pilot projects with Ford Motor Co., the U.S. Army, Eaton Corp. and United Parcel Service to get the technology into the real world as quickly as possible.”

From site: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/technology/>

“Benefits of Hydraulic Technology. Hydraulic drivetrains are particularly attractive for vehicle applications that entail a significant amount of stop-and-go driving, such as urban delivery trucks or school buses. A major benefit of a hydraulic hybrid vehicle is the ability to capture and use a large percentage of the energy normally lost in vehicle braking. Hydraulic hybrids can quickly and efficiently store and release great amounts of energy due to a higher power density. This is a critical factor in maximizing braking energy recovered and increasing the fuel economy benefit. While the primary benefit of hydraulics is higher fuel economy, hydraulics also increase vehicle acceleration performance. Hydraulic hybrid technology cost-effectively allows the engine speed or torque to be independent of vehicle speed resulting in cleaner and more efficient engine operation.”

We’ll see where this goes! If you see lots of hype in the press coming up, about 400% increases in gas mileage, you’ll know likely what they are talking about. Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem to help any for highway

driving, where you seldom have to start/stop, and would have to carry around a couple hundred pounds of extra hydraulic equipment which you aren't using on the open road, reducing your gas mileage.

Note the above articles reference ***** CONCEPT CARS ***** which may or may not ever see commercial production. JD Powers predicts there will be over 38 models of hybrids available in 2011.

The first hybrid car was built over a century ago, according to an article at Edmunds:

“ The Woods Motor Vehicle Company of Chicago introduced its Dual Power model in 1916...

The Woods Dual Power had two "finger levers" on the steering wheel that operated each power source and a single pedal to accelerate and brake. Once the levers were set, power was sent from either the gas engine or electric motor through the propeller shaft to the rear axle. The gasoline engine and the electric motor were connected through the use of a magnetic clutch. As a result, the vehicle could be operated on electric power only, on gasoline only or on both simultaneously.

To start the car using the electric motor, the driver simply moved the electric finger lever, which connected the storage battery with the electric motor. Once the vehicle was started, the lever could be advanced to increase the speed of up to 20 mph. To travel at higher speeds, the driver engaged the gasoline lever, which connected the two power sources, allowing the gasoline engine and electric motor to run at the same time.

Through adjustment of the two finger levers, the battery could be discharged or recharged during driving at speeds of 10 to 30 mph. Recharging was accomplished with the gasoline engine being used to power the electric motor which, once fully juiced, acted as a generator. There was even a form of regenerative braking.” Only a small number were made.

More reading at: <http://www.hybridcars.com/history.html>

At that time, the technology to seamlessly integrate the controls made operation difficult, and the car quickly faded into history. So when your friend tells you about how great the 'newly invented hybrid is', you can

remind him of the Woods Car from nearly 100 years ago! (and other prior art going back 100 years). The 'self starter' on gasoline power cars was the end of the electric cars. Until that time, you had to manually crank your gas engine to get it going – not an easy task for many.

Propagation Update

From the Feb 3 ARRL Propagation bulletin:

“January is over, so let us examine the average daily solar flux and sunspot numbers for the month compared with previous months.

The average daily sunspot numbers for the months January 2005 through January 2006 were 52, 45.4, 41, 41.5, 65.4, 59.8, 68.7, 65.6, 39.2, 13, 32.2, 62.6 and 26.7.

Average daily solar flux for the same months was 102.3, 97.2, 89.9, 85.9, 99.5, 93.7, 96.5, 92.4, 91.9, 76.6, 86.3, 90.8 and 86.6.

As expected, the solar cycle is declining, but there is a lot of variation from month to month.”

Solar flux gives you an idea of what the MUF will be – Maximum Usable Frequency. Not much happening on 10M as we head into the sunspot minimum.

KL7HBK occasionally gets on 20M CW, and has a good signal from 2nd AK. One day he was 579 in TX on my R5 vertical. If you need it listen for him. This summer, it appears that W6TMD/KB6UF, K3IMC, and AB4YZ among others are headed to all the districts in AK either before or after the convention in Wisconsin. Let's hope propagation works out so everyone can snag everything up there. On Feb 7th, KL7HBK showed up on 30M CW and worked about a dozen, but didn't hear another 6 calling. He should be back on both 20 and 30M.

More Jim Kunstler

From: http://www.kunstler.com/mags_diary16.html

“February 6, 2006

By now, President Bush's wildly irresponsible remarks on energy in his state of the union speech may have already vanished down the memory hole, but the damage will linger on. "America is addicted to oil," Mr. Bush began, failing to mention that underlying this addiction was a living arrangement that required people to drive their cars incessantly. A clueless public will continue to believe that "the best way to break this addiction is through technology. . ." and that "we must also change how we power our automobiles."

Mr. Bush recommended ethanol. As one wag put it after the speech: "America's heroin is oil, and ethanol will be our methadone." The expectation will still be that everybody must drive incessantly.

It is hard to believe that Mr. Bush does not know the truth of the situation, or that some of the clever people around him who run his brain do not know it, namely that ethanol and all other bio-fuels are net energy losers, that they require more energy to grow and process them than they produce in the end, and that the energy "inputs" required to do this are none other than oil and natural gas, the same fuels we already run engines on.

The president also said that "breakthroughs on this and other new technologies will help us reach another great goal, to replace more than 75 percent of our oil imports from the Middle East by 2025."

In point of fact, our oil imports from anywhere on the planet will be reduced by more than 75 percent because by that time worldwide oil depletion will be advanced to its terminal stage, and nobody will have any oil left to export -- assuming that the industrial nations have not ravaged each other by then in a war to control the diminishing supply of oil.

The key to the stupidity evinced by Mr. Bush's speech is the assumption that we ought to keep living the way we do in America, that we can keep running the interstate highway system, WalMart, and Walt Disney World on some other basis besides fossil fuels. The public probably wishes that this were so, but it isn't a service to pander to their wishes instead of addressing the mandates of reality. And reality is telling us something very different. Reality is saying that the life of

incessant motoring is a suicidal fiasco, and if we don't learn to inhabit the terrain of North America differently, a lot of us are going die, either in war, or by starvation when oil-and-gas-based farming craps out, or in civil violence proceeding from failed economic expectations.

I hate to keep harping on this, but Mr. Bush could have announced a major effort to restore the American railroad system. It would have been a major political coup. It would have a huge impact on our oil use. The public would benefit from it tremendously. And it would have put thousands of people to work on something really meaningful. Unlike trips to Mars and experiments in cold fusion, railroads are something we already know how to do, and the tracks are lying out there waiting to be fixed. But the reigning delusions of Hollywood and Las Vegas prevent us from thinking realistically about these things. We're only into wishing for grand slam home runs and five-hundred-million-dollar lottery jackpots. Anything less than that makes us feel like losers.”

Kunstler is known for his ‘anti-sprawl’ position – suburbia requires driving everywhere, and as people move further and further out, he feels the situation gets worse and worse. Railroads move goods for less than 1/3rd the energy as trucks. Barges move stuff at 1/10th the energy as trucks.

This month, I spent some \$\$\$\$ adding insulation to the attic to bring it up to over R50 insulation level, and had all the ventilation system pipes super sealed to prevent air leaks. In Texas, the furnace(s) and all the flexible ductwork is in the unconditioned attic. New good sealing weatherstripping was installed on all doors. Money upfront to save money down the road. If you are looking at buying a new home, think “Energy Star”. Within 2 years, you’ll be required to have R49 or better insulation in the attic to meet that standard in TX.

The USA and Canada will be falling off a cliff in 6-8 years in natural gas production. USA production is already declining. So is Canada’s, yet consumption rises year after year as more homes are built of bigger size. Magically, large quantities of IMPORTED liquid natural gas have to appear and be reliably delivered, mostly from countries that hate our guts. What are folks going to do when Natural Gas is 3 times today’s prices?

One local builder, known for his energy conserving homes, plans to build new 1300 sq foot homes that will use less than \$30/month in energy to heat and cool them. The price will be about \$100,000 which is in line for similar new homes of that size that are not very energy conserving. His homes will have geothermal heat pumps, foamed in insulation, including the interior of the roof, heat barriers under the roofing, overhangs for direct solar gain reduction in the summer time, etc. The heating/cooling system and all ducts will be in conditioned space in the attic (the envelope is sealed, combustion air for the furnace is piped in). It's amazing there is only one builder out of 100 in the Dallas area doing this. The others are 'doing business as usual' which insures that folks will have several hundred dollar per month (approaching \$500 and \$800/month) for the larger homes around.

Jim Sargent responded to a question with:

" I measure the utility usage or the energy usage of every home I built for 15 years on a monthly basis and what I learned that can do is take a fairly standard house with fairly standard parts -- you know, wood frame and things like -- in the Dallas area and build, say, a 2,500 square foot home where you can cool for about a dollar a day or a little bit less. That's \$30 a month, and these were fairly conventional homes. Nothing really unusual. My smaller homes are historically heated and cooled for about 35 cents a day - that's less than \$13 a month. "

Now, let me tell you – the average bill for a 2500 sq foot home in Dallas, built the 'conventional way' is well over \$100/month. My neighbor in that size house came over jumping and screaming when his December bill hit \$300/mo, and we are having a relatively mild winter. Now, 15 years ago, natural gas was 1/5th the price it is today. No one worried about \$25 or maybe a worst case \$50/mo heating bill. Same for cooling, with relatively cheap electricity. Now, suddenly, the pain is being felt! Air conditioning bills hit \$250/month in the summer time for 2500 sq feet, and 80% of the houses around here are 3500sq feet and up.

It's possible to retrofit, but its like trying to take your beat up Swan 500 and converting it to solid state. You have to scrap much of the existing material, tear things down to get at the chassis, and it is a lot of work to retrofit afterwards. However, more amazingly, people are still buying houses built 'the old way' with little consideration of what the current

and future heating bills will be. They'd rather spend \$3000 on a 'jacuzzi' tub in the bathroom than \$3000 in insulation upgrades, thermal heat barriers in the roof, foamed envelope construction. They'd rather have tile in more rooms that worry about reducing their energy bills by 50% a month. (It's not much different that the way folks buy cars...spend for all the options, style, luxury and status they want with little consideration for gas consumption).

Sargent has built a 'zero energy' house in Frisco, TX last year. With the addition of solar cells on the roof, the net energy bill for the house is \$0. The solar electric system is 'grid connected' and feeds power back into the grid when the house demands do not take all of it.

One has to be totally amazed that the technology is here TODAY, yet 'inertia', ignorant builders, building codes that require 'the same old stuff' (that costs the same old amount to run), and 'consume now' house buyers are going to ruin the economic well being of a hundred million home owners over the next 20 years. It is 'MacMansions' going up everywhere, and no one other than Jim Sargent is designing low energy use houses. Amazing, isn't it?

Links for further reading if you are interested:

<http://homegarden.expertvillage.com/interviews/zero-energy-home.htm>

<http://www.enerjazz.com/house/whouse.html>

<http://www.zeroenergyhomedallas.com/builder.html>

Awards Issued

6th time #26, N4CD, Bob, 1/27/06
USACA #1133, W0JAR, John, 2/1/06
USACW-II #14, N4CD, Bob, 1/27/06

USACW #81, NN9K, Pete, 1/26/06
USACW #82, AB7RW, Phil, 1/26/06
9nth Time #3, WDX4KEF, Charles, 2/10/06
2nd Time #359, N8KIE, Bob, 2/18/06

County Line Signs in Texas

If you zip around Texas putting out the counties, you can find three generations of county line signs. The newest ones, and easiest to find, and almost always present, are the large metal signs on a single metal post, sometimes on a double post like shown, located 2 to 15 feet off the highway paving. If you look at the picture below, you'll see the large metal sign for Archer County.



County Line – Archer/Wichita, TX

You will also see the older generation of signs, which consist of wood side by side county names, vertically written, on a 7 or 8 foot high total marker. Sometimes they are 'flat', other times they are part of a triangular shape.



County Line Donley/Gray, TX

This is convenient for those of us who sometimes get to a county line, and forget which counties are there (after a long day, they all tend to run together!). You can sit on the county line, look out the window, and see where you are. Maybe 15-20% of all the county lines in Texas have both sets of signs. When the wood signs deteriorate or are knocked over by storms, farm machinery, mowing equipment, or bad drivers, they often are not replaced. On the other hand, sometimes the newer signs are knocked down by bad driver and only older signs remain. Sometimes none! A smart county hunter in TX looks on both sides of the road – sometimes only the sign in the other direction is still standing.

However, the oldest county line signs (markers) are often hard to find and might only be present at well under 10% of the county lines in the state. You've got to look hard, and often the markers are buried in the grass, or have long vanished due to road upgrades, or just weathering away.

If you look close in this sign above, you will see a concrete post, maybe 18-24 inches tall, about 4 inches on a side at the left hand side of the picture. It is usually put at the very edge of the road right-of-way. (Where road rights-of-way have been expanded, the markers are long gone). On the concrete post you'll see the two county lines, chiseled in. These probably date back more than 50 years. If it still exists, often it is obscured by brush along the fence line.

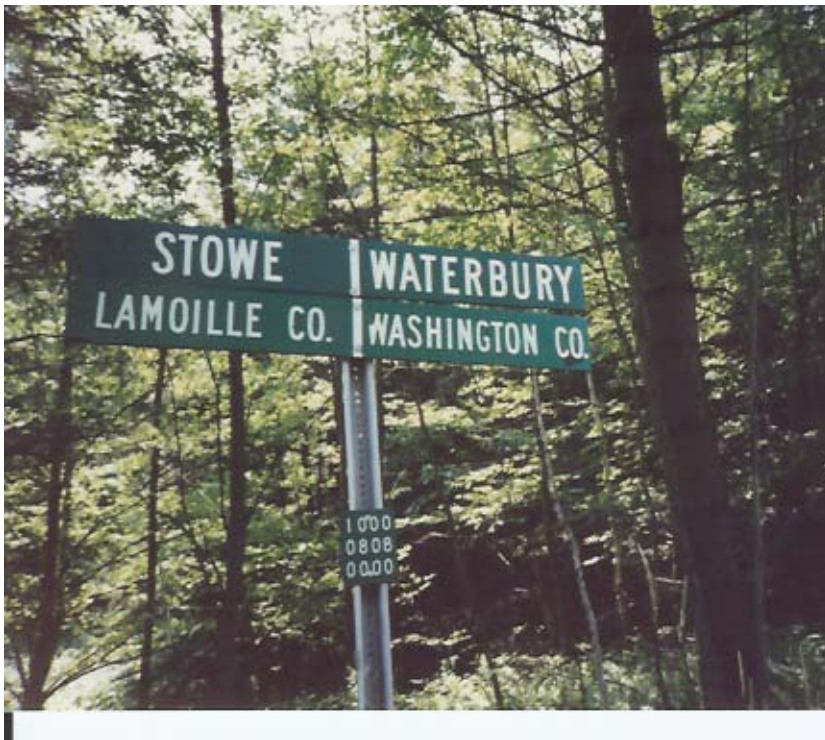
Here's another pic of the oldest and older signs, with N4CD in the picture. The concrete marker is leaning. Wonder how long it will survive?



N4CD-Burnet/Lampasas, TX (sometime back in mid 90s)

Next time you head to Texas for a mini or other event, see how many of the older generation signs you can find. There are a few (rare) places with all three generations of signs present.

Other states have interesting variations on signs. If you get to Vermont, you'll see the following everywhere:



N4CD pic - County Line of Lamoille/Washington, VT

And to be fair to Louisiana, they don't have county line signs. They have "Parish signs" similar to the following:



Of course, to help out the county hunters, some states have signs with both counties – ie, Entering County A, leaving County B. Then you know exactly where you are when you start your run.



County Line King & Queen/Gloucester, VA
WB9OOG/M with N4CD – 1994/5?

Looking at the CW Stats

Last month we published the Year End CW stats compiled by KA3MMM. They are also published on the www.countyhunter.com site each year.

We have quite a few getting close to finishing up first time all CW. I noted the following as of the end of the year:

AD1C at 2954, first time, closing in.
KO1U at 3033
K4XI at 3050
KR5C 3071 – only 6 to go!
N5KDW at 3015
N5XG at 3066 (and that for USACA too)
AD6Z at 3030
W8YL at 3040
K0ZT at 3062
ND9M at 3044
N0ZA at 3068

KB8OMG at 3027
K7VAY at 3042
WD6CKT at 3063

For second time

W3DYA at 3056
K8CW at 3074 cw
WD9BCG at 3003

Nth time

KA3MMM 3048 for 5th time cw
W9MSE 3041 for 3rd time cw
KD8HB 3064 for 4th time cw

Looks like its time for some of the mobiles to try and finish off those folks! (and for these folks to start hunting for skeds, sending emails, etc). The world doesn't start and stop on 'net frequencies'. Some are closing in and those last ones might be tough ones to get. In Jan, we had 2 cw only CH finish up for first time all cw. Let's have a few every month!

De N4CD

The W0GXQ/NF0N Trip to SD

Jerry posted on the KK7X web site:

“Mike and I really enjoyed the trip - the weather and band conditions were super! The trip to IA/SD and back to MN was 1,940 miles and I ran 72 counties. Total contacts - 2,321 of which 1,238 were run on CW in two NE and thirty two SD counties. I believe Mike made 442 contacts on SSB and a handful on CW (other than GXQ in all of them). My SSB count was 39.

Breakdown of the CW contacts: On 30m - 892 (72%), on 40m - 212 (17%), on 20m - 70 (6%), and on 80m - 64 (5%). Just about what was expected. The runs on 80m were

fun, but we were both beat ... hi.

Mellette will be a county neither of us will ever forget! We took Exit 172 from I-90 and crossed over the White River. Looks simple on the map, but it was trip that made us laugh at ourselves for being crazy county hunters. Perhaps we will send N4CD a picture of the location and the antenna we had to use to "get our signal out of the hole".

Mike provided me with 13 new ones on 30m and I also picked up 6 for MG. Eight new counties run as mobile for me also. We gave out 14 Last Counties in SD and I gave out another 7 going to and from SD. Was also able to give "Next to Last" to K8ZZ and NN9K.

If you have never run "Dual Op Mobile", you should try it sometime. This is my twelfth trip with six different ops (KA3DRO, W9MSE, K0EVE, KC0JG, WU3H, and NF0N). An added pleasure when both copy CW at the same speed! By the way, Mike and I have a day trip planned for Iowa later. And, I am trying to get K0EVE to attend the National in Appleton with me, so there is another one (for WI ctys)."

End of an Era – No More Telegrams

As reported on LiveScience.com:

After 145 years, the Western Union Company quietly stopped sending telegrams.

"Effective January 27, 2006, Western Union will discontinue all Telegram and Commercial Messaging services. We regret any inconvenience this may cause you, and we thank you for your loyal patronage. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a customer service representative."

Starting in the early 80s, with long distance rates plummeting thanks to competition created by the FCC in the long distance market, and companies

like MCI, the use of telegrams declined. Additionally, the FAX machine made it possible to send long documents inexpensively. When cellphones came along, telegram use declined even further. Then 'email' arrived.

The world's first telegram was sent on May 24, 1844 by inventor Samuel Morse between Baltimore and Washington, DC. The telegraph was a precursor to the Internet in that it allowed rapid communication, for the first time, across great distances. Nearly all towns and villages in the US were 'connected' to the telegraph grid. In frenzy similar to the 'dot.com' boom, or the building of tens of thousands of MacDonald's, local franchises and competitive systems sprung up everywhere.

The first Atlantic cable followed several decades later, and by 1903, the entire world was crisscrossed with undersea telegraph cables from South America to Australia, Asia, Europe, North America, and most Island nations.

The history of Western Union can be traced back to 1851 as the Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company. By 1861, during the Civil War, it had created a coast-to-coast network of lines.

Other WU company milestones include:

- **1866:** Introduced the first stock ticker.
- **1871:** Introduced money transfers.
- **1884:** Became one of the original 11 stocks tracked by the Dow Jones Average.
- **1914:** Introduced the first consumer charge card.
- **1964:** Began using a transcontinental microwave relay systems to replace land lines.
- **1974:** Launched Westar I, the first U.S. dedicated communications satellite into geosynchronous orbit.

Telegrams reached their peak popularity in the 1920s and 1930s when it was cheaper to send a telegram than to place a long distance telephone call. People would save money by using the word "stop" instead of periods to end sentences because punctuation was extra while the four character word was free. By last year, only 20,000 telegrams were sent at about \$10 a message, mostly from companies using the service for formal notifications. That's a far cry from the 200 million per year in 1929!

Recent generations didn't receive telegrams and didn't know you could send them. Recently, Western Union was acquired by First Data Corp, and its current business is money transfer. WU is being spun off again as a publicly traded company.

Not long ago, the US Gov't discontinued the use of Morse Code for Coastal Wireless stations. Soon, it seems that governments world wide will remove the requirement for Morse Code from Amateur Radio examinations. In the USA, WU discontinued use of 'Morse code' about 1920, using the teleprinter to send messages. However, various countries and railroads around the world continued to use manually sent and received code up till the 1990s, and international ship traffic used Morse as a backup and for ship to shore coordination and traffic until very recently. Likely around the world, ships are still using Morse.

There are many collectors of WU memorabilia and old telegrams, and especially when they are with the envelope (cover) in which they were delivered. You'll see them listed on Ebay as 'telegraph covers'. Did you know that telegram companies issued stamps? You could attach the right amount of stamps to a pre-paid telegram and drop in a drop box, or have a telegraph messenger pick it up and take it to the office for transmission? Here are some 25c Western Union Stamps. Other companies such as Postal Telegraph and Pacific Telegraph issued them as well.



Update on 3556.5

Ron, KB6UF, made a trip up to Missouri at the beginning of February. Leaving late at night, he ran all the counties on the way up to MO on 80M CW. According to the spots, starting in Lincoln, MS at 0627Z (or 1:30AM Central time) Ron ran counties up to Scott, MO at 1228Z, then switched to 40 and 30M. After 2 days of running counties across the state on 40M SSB and 20/30/40cw, he headed back south. When 30 and 40M went to sleep for the night, he switched to 3556.5 and ran the counties on I55 all the way home, switching to 80M around Cape Girardeau, MS and then all the way back to Louisiana. On the same day, Gary, W4GNS was running counties in Texas on 80M cw. Quite a few county hunters were around to work the counties along the route. After about 9pm, I lost Ron at my QTH, but managed to snag him in a few with the mobile antenna on the back of the car connected to the home rig. No permanent 80m antenna yet, and a high noise level at the QTH on 80M.

As of early Feb, counties in at least 17 states have been spotted on the W6RK site on 3556.5, plus other operators in other states have been participating in the net.

Ron, KB6UF posted about his trip:

“I drove a bunch of miles, talked to a bunch of people, and had a great time. But on the serious side, 80 cw was fun, especially when you drive all night long. (which I have a habit of doing.) 80 was clear most of time, tried 75 but no takers up or back, ...I flipped back and forth between the two (CW and SSB).

During the day, 30 and 40 cw were the hot bands, 20 cw would heat up occasionally, I guess that happens if posted, I discovered if I went there (20 cw) unannounced, no takers, but 30 and 40 cw folks were laying in wait to pounce.. The hard core cw guys KQ0B, N4RS WB4VFN worked all the counties on 80 cw from Pike, MS to Cape Girardeau, MO (that's 12 midnight to about 7:00 am in the morning for you day light only folks - there is life after night fall). Few others were pounding away from St Louis to LA KB6TAL, N4CD, and a few more (have to wait until I transcribe all the logs (uggh)) Any way it was fun.”

Charlie, W0RRY reported, after the Feb 7th Tuesday night session: “I got on some last night on 80 Meters. I made 14 QSO's in 16 different Counties. The active mobiles were W4GNS, K5OT, N9JF, and K8ZZ. I did pick up

one new CW county. I heard W6 to AD1 stations, and K8 to K5, so covered almost all the continental US. “

Gary, W4GNS, and N4CD had an eyeball meet in Collin, TX at the truck stop at exit 48 on US75. The next day, on Feb 5, W4GNS left Collin, TX headed north. He ran on 20/30/40 cw, and after the sun set, and the other bands faded away, he ran on 3556.5 for another 15 counties from 0029z in Vernon, MO up to 0544Z in Harrison, IA. If you are able to stay on the radio 20 hours a day, the counties are being run late at times!

According to a 80M survey done by Risto, with results available at:

<http://www.w6rk.com/survey-80m.html>

the choice of 3556.5 has been a good one. Many people have indicated interest in getting on who are currently not QRV on the band.

W6TMD Trip to Oregon-Stats

“Here are some statistics from my recent trip thru California and Oregon:

- 1) 2458 miles
- 2) 1.507 Qs per mile (3705 total contacts)
- 3) County with most Qs – Coos, OR with 120 contacts (65 SSB, 55 CW)
 - a. 65 SSB (64 on 20M and 1 on 40M)
 - b. 55 CW (27; 20M, 23; 30M, 5; 40M)
- 4) For the 3 days in Oregon, average Qs per county was 93.5

- 5) For the total trip, average Qs per county was 72.6
- 6) On CW, I ran 20M first, then 30 and 40, which may account for the relatively large number of contacts on 20 CW.
- 7) Cheapest Gas: 213.9/gallon in central Oregon. - Most expensive gas: 264.9/gallon in central Calif. (243.9 back home)
- 8) Number of inches of rain Sat., Sun., and Mon. in Oregon – about average for the total year in Southern California. But I was having too much fun to be bothered by the rain.....” de W6TMD

State QSO Parties

What if they gave a party and no one showed up? The past two months have been very disappointing. (see ch.w6rk.com for the spots)

The Delaware QSO party was a big bust. A few stations spotted, and only three stations spotted on CW (N3DXX, KB3KBZ and NY3C) and not even all three counties apparently on the air on cw. Two counties spotted on SSB. There were several spots for PSK31. Why? There are many contest grade stations in Delaware, but just a handful turned out. Where were they? Not even on for just a few hours. HamCall lists over 200 hams in Kent county DE, 400 in Sussex, and 800 in New Castle.

But that was nothing compared to the “Vermont QSO Party”. Huh? There seems to have been one ‘mobile’ and that is a regular county hunter mobile, KW1DX on SSB, who ran 2 counties. There were two loud stations, WB2MIC and WB1GQR that spend many hours on the air, but only WB2MIC operated CW. Only brief appearance only on SSB by K1KU, N1BCL, and K1KD (two on 40m, one on 20M). One on PSK31. There are hundreds of active stations in VT. OK..the weather wasn’t great..which means folks had lots of time to stay at home and operate at least a little bit. If that is all the ‘ham spirit’ there is in VT, that’s sad. There’s 2500 hams listed in VT. Isn’t that amazing?

The next weekend was the NNY operating event – NO spots – who knows if anyone was really on the air. This has been the same for the past few years – nothing heard, no spots seen. Maybe they are all working themselves on 80m during the day, but no one else in the country seems to be able to hear them.

NH is right next to Vermont, and they must take lessons from each other. On SSB, AF1T, K1BKE, KB1SO, N1FOJ. ON CW, we only had K1BKE, AE1N. A total of 3 of the NH counties were spotted on the air! No mobiles spotted. Heck, you can run around the entire state mobile in a day.

There were some folks on digital modes in the QSO parties. W1FZ responded to a post on the QRZ.com forum:

“I made well over 360 Digital QSOs and I never heard your call. I think you were a little out of line to condemn the NHQSO party, we also had our club working the QSO party and did quite well. They were mostly new hams and had never run in a QSO party before. I am a little hurt that you would pass judgement on us up here, and to boot I never heard you on”.

Yes, I admit, I’m not using digital modes for county hunting – it might be time to start doing it – MARAC offers a digital county hunting award, and many new hams migrate to the digital modes. (Of course, this is a CW oriented county hunting newsletter!_

There’s over 5000 hams in New Hampshire. When only 1 in 1000 can get on, it is simply pathetic! It’s great a few new hams got on – it would be a lot better if they could multiply that throughout the state each year!

At the same time, the LA QSO party was in full swing. Spots on SSB all day long. Unfortunately, all the mobiles running seemed to only have 20M capability, which left out half the country. Most of the QSO party activity in the central part of the USA is on 40m. Another bust for many folks. We could watch the spots go by for 20m, but no hope of working them at a few hundred miles on 20M. It’s now the bottom of the sunspot cycle. Hello!!!

Most folks who have a state QSO party try and get all the counties on the air. Regularly, all the CA counties show up for the CQP. Almost all 254 TX counties are run each year. Florida does an excellent job of getting out the counties with mobiles and fixed stations. Same for PA. MN did great, and IL and IN always get the turn out.

The only contest that seems good to get counties in New England is the NE QSO party. You wonder why they even have a VT and NH QSO party. You can work more DE stations in Sweepstakes than in the DEL QSO party. At least they should try and get every county on the air, CW and SSB for a few hours!!!!

On the K3IMC forum – some food for thought:

“These "QSO Parties have turned into CW QSO PARTYs... With the contest involved, giving two points to cw contacts, the CW contest folks are increasing in numbers as testers, and the SSB stations active are dwindling in every state. I discussed this at length last year with N9JF when he had the stats for the IL QP. I had Indiana's. Same thing, cw testers in both and some run into each other states. SSB Stations and logs confirm what you can't hear on the bands, little activity.Everyone else had 90 % or more cw contacts..... And if you are looking for new ones for CH, better be a CW fan or you lose. CW aint dead! “

Could it be that the relaxation of the 20wpm 'extra class' code license, and 13 wpm "General Class" license, is finally catching up with a lot of people? They barely learned enough code at 5wpm to get by, likely never used it on the air or developed any real proficiency, and now complain about how all the activity is on CW. (and they are left out). Duh? For those that spent the time to learn code at 13 or 20wpm, and developed proficiency, they have a lot more fun in the QSO parties, both as a mobile and as someone at home hunting counties. (this is a CW oriented newsletter!). However, there is always room for SSB ops to get on for a few hours – might not be as much fun as CW, but you can 'put out the county' on several bands, work the other SSB ops. The CW folks sing the blues when mobiles go out and only run SSB – they need the counties on cw, or get through the QRM on SSB to work the mobiles.

There's a cure for it – learn cw. Last I checked, it isn't illegal to start learning CW proficiency after you get your license. Many now on cw have had to 'brush up' on cw speed to feel comfy on the net.

Events for March 2006

Idaho QSO Party 1300Z, Mar 11 to 0100Z, Mar 12
1300Z, Mar 12 to 0100Z, Mar 13

Oklahoma QSO Party 1400Z, Mar 11 to 0200Z, Mar 12
1400Z-2000Z, Mar 12

Wisconsin QSO Party 1800Z, Mar 12 to 0100Z, Mar 13

Virginia QSO Party 1800Z, Mar 18 to 0200Z, Mar 20

Courtesy of the WA7BNM contest page. Links the the web pages for complete rules at:

<http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html>

FINI

That's it for this month! See you next month in the annual April 1 edition.

De N4CD