

County Hunter News

March 1, 2016
Volume 12, 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 and 14.324. The cw folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.9155, and 28.0565 when sunspots better). Look around 18136 or for occasional 17M SSB runs usually after the run on 20M SSB. (21.336 and 28.336)

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

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

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

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

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

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

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

find information on these awards and the rules at:

http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at:

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

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

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

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

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

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

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

Notes from the Editor

The winter is fading fast for much of the country – although the northern parts are still having snow and cold weather. The south is already into severe spring weather with major thunderstorms and tornadoes and it only gets worse in March through June for the south.

There's been some activity – with a mobile or two out at a time. We're into State QSO party – some are putting out the counties – and others are 'chasing'. So far we've had a few, and a lot more are scheduled to come up in the next few months.

No MARAC awards were issued this month – not at least 'numbered ones' which show up on the MARAC homepage. Bob, KC6AWX, is now ready to devote more time to the MARAC awards program so you can send in your LC requests now.

The bands are full of National Parks on the Air – 40M really busy back east, and 20m for the rest of the country.

So it's off to another newsletter.

Mobile Activity This Period

Karl, K4YT, was up in NJ putting out the counties.

Darl, NA8W, headed on down to FL. Ran around while down there.

KA2LHO headed north from FL to NY

Jim, N4JT, was busy in TX putting them out on digital modes.

AB7NK/K7SEN headed east to NM. Then were noted out giving data contacts in AZ.

KB0BA//N0XYL were on the road once again.

W5QP was up in KS putting them out.

Fred, K0FG, headed to FL

KS5A was spotted in south and east TX.

Gary, KB9AIT headed to F and back.

Steve, AK8A headed to TX then returned.

N0SM ran a few in IA

Jim, N9JF, was spotted in IA putting them out.

Second District AK was spotted with a station participating in an AK event to get many stations on the air from rural places.

Mike, KA4RRU was out many days putting out the parks.

Richard, W5IL, was also heavy into the NPOTAs running counties in NM.

Kerry, W4SIG was putting them out in TN, AR and other states.

Ron, KB6UF, ran some in LA and MS for the folks.

On the Road with N4CD I

Old and New Car.....

The trusty 2009 Chevy Malibu was now history. It was a great car. In 7 years and 177,314 miles – nothing had gone wrong – other than the usual maintenance type things like tires, oil changes and filters, one burned out tail light bulb, one wheel alignment, one battery, new brakes at 135,000 miles. Well, I likely did kill the Transmission Control Module – know when and where – NYC just before Lincoln Tunnel sitting very close to 30 foot high wall making last few contacts for NY, NY. Sitting six inches from the wall. Got RF into car bad. Dashboard went crazy. From that point on, the car would drop out of sixth gear and sit in fifth gear as you cruised along. Ate more gas on the way home. Took that car in to the dealer. Didn't mention the RF.

Fixed under 100K/5 year warranty – car had lost 6th gear. Back to normal. Otherwise – it had been in about 40 states on county hunting trips. Good radio car. It was almost scary – nothing had gone wrong – no water pumps, alternators, CV joints, belts, hoses. Nothing. Did replace the brakes at 135,000 miles. Still had some pad left but it had definite 'wobble' when you touched the brakes. Not too bad, but I was hoping for not having to change the brakes. Missed that goal.

The local service folks at the dealer checked it out every 30K miles. It just kept on going – but my last few cars began to self destruct around 200K miles(transmission

troubles) and eight years old, so I figured the time was right for a new one.

Now there was a replacement for the 2009 Chevy Malibu– a 2016 Malibu Limited. Same color. For the first part of the 2016 model year, they made almost the same as the 2015 car.....and shortly thereafter came out with a new design for 2016. The price was right on the Limited version – they were clearing out inventory. The new ones don't have a left arm rest either – not good for me since I drive with left hand most of time!

I put the radio in the same way as before – direct connection to battery plus lead – but now **you should not connect to negative side of battery**. These new fangled cars have a current sensor on the negative lead from the battery to ground – and measure the current flowing in that lead. If you hook up the negative lead to the battery, you bypass that. It's part of the control system that maintains the charge in the main battery. So I hooked to a ground point that had a few other leads going to ground nearby. I hooked the positive lead to the battery terminal. There's a whole gaggle of stuff right at that positive battery terminal. Nothing is connected to the negative battery terminal other than the fat wire to ground, with a sensor around it to measure current in it. There are a half dozen points where other things are connected to ground.

Radio seemed happy.. Receiver worked OK – other than – dang – the crud on 7056.5. Same as the 2009 – until the TCM failed and the new one didn't have the problem. Power meter went all the way up. OK – time for a road trip! Nothing seemed affected by the RF. Headed to local park – all seemed OK. Didn't make a QSO – my mistake. So it was time for a shake down cruise out to west Texas and some new National Park units – plus of course a bunch of counties as I headed to the NP units.

Heading to the Panhandle/Alibates Flint National Monument

Now was time for a 'shake down' cruise and having fun with the new car.

The route was right up to Wichita Falls then 287 all the way to Amarillo Texas in the panhandle following along the railroad tracks. Scenery? Flatter than a pancake most of the way. Boring. Been there and done that probably 30 times before – but I ran all the counties up and back. Got gas and chow in Childress. Hit Amarillo about 6-7 hours after leaving home – made good time. New car nice to drive and speed limit 70-75 mph most of way after Wichita Falls. Cruised along at 5-10 over. I was planning on staying at the Super 8 Motel in Amarillo – dozens of motels there.

However, I was early so no need to get to motel- I headed straight for Alibates Flint National Monument about 40 miles north. Temperatures were in the 60s – we were

having a 'warm spell' with southern air for a few days.

Alibates Flint is a site where as far back as 13,000 years ago, Native Americans would come and get flint from this area to make spear heads and arrow heads. There are 'alibate flint' spearheads found in mammoth remains in New Mexico – so we know at least how far back these flint deposits were used. Later, the Plains Village subgroup built permanent facilities here. In the 1930s, the WPA (Works Progress Administration set up during the Great Depression) uncovered these ruins . In 1965, Congress made this area a National Monument – the only one in Texas.



N4CD at MN03
Potter County, TX

I zipped into the Visitor Center and looked around. Got my 'Passport Book' stamped and signed the visitor log. Definitely N4CD was here. Then I got on the radio and cranked out 200 plus QSOs in 2 hours. Mostly 20 SSB but the first few were on 30 cw. Larry, K5RK needed this – he's down by Houston and 20m likely wouldn't work. He's currently NR 1 in chasing national park units with over 200 of the 480 worked so far in just January! So I'd give him first contact on 30M and worked another dozen there before switching to SSB. 90% of the 'hunters' are on SSB. Did run some cw. I may have been the first to transmit from this park. Sat with window down – nice outside.

You can take the ranger led tour of the flint quarries twice a day.(10 am and 2pm) Not many visitors were there today – maybe six cars in the parking lot. It's a bit off the beaten path. I suspect a lot more visit in warmer weather while folks visit and camp at

the Lake Meredith National recreation area very close by. Weather was great with temps headed up to the 70 deg area and lots of sun – although definitely a strong north breeze. This was a 'warm spell' and cold was on the way in a few days along with snow further north in NE and IA.

At the visitor center, the ranger offered some flints to me. Of course, they did not come from the monument site – that's a no-no. At one time, you could drive into the quarry area – but a few rotten apples were caught loading up pickup trucks full of flints to sell at flea markets 20 years ago – and that ended that - now you have to walk in to the quarry on one mile hike each way. Otherwise, enjoy the visitor center displays and head on out. The flints the ranger had were from road construction on a stretch of gravel road – when the road crews are going there, they notify the rangers and they follow picking up any flints the road crews generate with the grading equipment (not on gov't land). Picked a few good ones from the bucket – hi hi.

This area was part of geological upheaval. Below ground thousands of feet down are mountain peaks from the Arbuckle range. In places, flint deposits are at the surface. The flints found here are unique – light colored almost pale white. Historians have found them in various sites for hundreds of miles around, leading to the conclusion there was an active trading network way back when for thousands of years.



Lake Meredith National Recreation Area

After the pile up died down and callers dropped off - it was time to put out nearby Lake Meredith Recreation Area - RC14! Easy once you are here at Alibates – drive out of the visitor center and you are there. I turned right – and went another 3 miles to the dead end by the lake – and a giant turn around area. N4CD sat there for a bit over an hour and put 166 folks in the log quickly. Larry, K5RK was first in the log on 30M again (phone call helps – hi hi) – a new one for him. N6PE, USCA #1035, is also one of the 'chasers' – in most of the parks I've been in. So is Paul, NU4C – USACA #1206. Probably 10 or more county hunters - many now not active on nets as they 'finished up' – are participating. Seems KA9JAC and WD4OIN are in there all the time, too. Exactly one pickup truck came this far and turned around. Lonely if you break down!

The sun sets fairly early in winter still, so N4CD couldn't stay too long – had to go the 40 miles back to Amarillo – get to the motel and get dinner before 'dark' at about 6:30 or so. Band condx on 20m were going 'long', too. Had to go QRT with the pileup still there. I zipped on down the road – cruising along at 75 (speed limit 70), got to the Super 8 Central – there are two Super 8 motels here – and checked in. \$54 plus tax – up to \$65 total. Headed out to a Golden Corral six miles down the interstate – good – \$12 - then back to the motel in 'near dark'. There are dozens of restaurants here, including the Big Tex steak house – where you get a free 72oz steak if you can eat it all, plus a plate load of fries and salad, in less than one hour. Many try it but few succeed. Six pounds of steak and likely six pounds of fries and salad. No thanks – not on my diet plan these days.

Slept well. It was getting cold outside.

Amarillo is up a 3600 feet AMSL so the temps drop about 40 degrees at night. In the morning it was 40 degrees outside with a stiff 20-30 mph north wind. The Super 8 had waffles, plus apples, juice, cereal, coffee, muffins, etc. I filled up.

The car needed some gas – and I froze my tail off putting gas in at a SLOW gas pump. A minute per gallon was about all the pump could do.. Brrrr. Just put in 10 bucks worth and that would have to do for a while. Then I headed north back to the Lake Meredith recreation area to run it a bit more. Think I was the first to run this park too! The day before I had to leave before all the 'chasers' got a QSO.

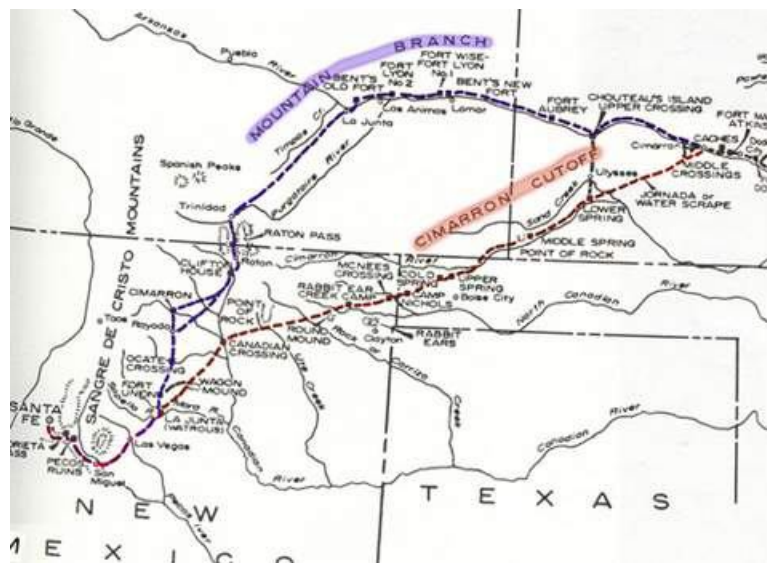
I'd try a different spot on the opposite side of the lake. There are various camp grounds, day use areas and other access points all around the long lake.. The plan was to head north 80 miles or so up to Cimarron County Oklahoma later in the day.. There you can

find the Santa Fe Trail as it slices through the northwest corner of the county. But first – just before the Canadian River - which is what formed Lake Meredith – you can take a dirt road off the main highway about 2 miles and be back in the park again. Whoa – it's seriously cold outside temp now 20 deg cooler than in 'the city' – 22 degrees and the wind is rocking the car.

This a 4 wheeling area – lots of sand dunes with loads of tracks and there were Jeeps about. The road was in great shape with good traction. Don't try this after a rain or during rain or you'll be up to your wheel wells off the 'road' into the sand before you go far! It was bone dry so no problem going the two miles. Twenty meters was real busy a bit later with 'Winter Field Day' stations as well as the usual weekend 'nets' and groups meeting. I did find a frequency for a while – then lost it an hour later as QRM moved in. Well, time to move on. Added another 80 QSOs bringing the total to over 200Qs. During the trip, 30M frequencies occasionally got clobbered by the VP8 expedition pile up – humongous. Not nice. They took up much of the entire band.

Headed to the Santa Fe Trail

After a short trip back to the main highway 287, the car zipped on up to Boise City OK about 80 miles away to the north for the next National Park unit – the Santa Fe Trail. This one has been run a bunch – by AD0DX and others – as it crosses half a dozen states. The trail splits and this location – and I'd be on the Cimarron Cut-Off – a short cut found later and used. The other route was the “Mountain Route” that took you through Raton Pass CO – tough on wagon trains.



Mountain Route – Blue – Cimarron Cut off - Red

Once the southern route was found, it became the primary route. Trails tended to follow rivers when possible. You left the Arkansas River – and had a 50 mile stretch, including this site, without water before you reached the next river. This was a 'bad stretch' especially when water levels were low or non existent in the rivers. However, most of the traffic went this way. There were military forts along the way that needed to be supplied and large groups of wagons regularly ferried supplies to the forts which guarded the route – and helped stop Indian attacks.



Santa Fe Trail
Really used during Gold Rush!

This marker on route 324 from Boise City to Kenton – the middle of nowhere. Really! Not a single car passed on by! Ground is blowing type sandy dirt – dry as a bone. The wagon ruts from 100 years ago are visible. There is no paved road beyond Kenton, either.

After a good run – but not as good as others – as it was well put out – I headed out. I get credit for activation with 10 QSOs or more so no sweat there but after a couple hundred miles, it's nice to get a pile of QSOs – especially for those still needing it. It was a weekend – more folks around on weekends by far in the general ham population. Had over 100 Q so can't complain. Cimarron County, OK for the county hunters – and I waited till I was at the Trail to run it – you can usually count on county hunters for a dozen or more contacts.

On the Way to Washita Battlefield

There is no sense in repeating counties and backtracking for a county hunter – so I headed due east in OKLA hitting the 3 panhandle counties (Cimarron, Texas, Beaver) then into the corner of TX. Lipscomb turned out to be LC for Joe, WB0CQO, and we did it SSB with maybe 1w out of the IC706 into the 40m cw antenna - with the help of Gene, K5GE with phone calls. So far, I'd run just about every county on the new MARAC net on 14.324, as well as on CW. The next destination was Washita Battle Ground just north of I-40 in Roger Mills County in the western part of OK.

The new car was doing fine – and – the passenger seat air bag being 'on' most of the time . That's not supposed to happen unless there is 50 lbs in the passenger seat. One minor new car bug found. Sometimes it would go off and stay off for a while.

I arrived late in the afternoon – 4:15 pm. Took the Percy Pic, went into visitor center and signed the guest book – and got my Passport book stamped. Well, it is 'U-stamp it' deal. They have the stamps and you can stamp anything you want. They have a 1/2 hour film on the battlefield – but I skipped it. It was time to get on and get my 10 or more QSOs for credit. Larry, K5RK needed this too – maybe I was the first one here? A quick QSO on 30M took place, then I switched to 20m SSB and put a quick 150 in the log. Again, it was getting to the point of time to head on out to find a motel and hunker down for the night. It was 40 miles to Elk City , OK – which has loads of motels. I called a Motel 6 earlier....and they had rooms – no problem. Zipped on in - \$46 plus tax - \$54 overall.

Right behind the motel is a restaurant 'Home Cooking'. Had dinner there and filled up! Then 500 feet back to motel room – redone older motel – decent. Hit the hay early. Up at 6am and wandered over to same restaurant for nice breakfast. By 7:15 am I was on the road headed north again the 40 miles or so to Washita Battlefied to finish the run. Added in more to reach over 200Qs.

This is the spot where in 1868, Lt Colonel George Custer attacked the Southern Cheyenne tribe of Chief Black Kettle. Custer was involved the the Winter Campaign to force the Indians onto reservations. In what some call a Massacre – Custer killed between 30 and 60 native Americans, took 55 women and children hostage, burned the village and all the winter supplies. That left any remaining members helpless in the middle of winter – and forced them to move to the reservations. (They then became lifelong democrats – totally depended upon government for food, education, and shelter.)

This was hailed as a great victory for Custer who quickly rose in the ranks. He did get payback at the Battle of Little Big Horn 18 months later where the Indians cleaned his clock and Custer and his unit wound up dead. Some say he became too arrogant and too seeking of fame, and threw caution to the wind.

This battle ground was turned into a National Historic Site in 1965. President Lyndon Johnson was busy creating parks – a democrat bloating government. Now we have too many parks and not enough budget to really keep them all in tip-top shape.



Washita National Historic Site NS-75

Headed back home

After a few hours and 200 plus Qs overall, it was time to zip on home. The GPS lady says I could be home by 4:30 which would suit me fine. I zigged a bit in southern OK

to hit some less run counties like Kiowa and Tillman, then south into Texas and home via 287 and 380 to home. Laid back, enjoyed the radio for the last part of the trip – did put out a few along the way. The car battery voltage indicated that the reading was 12.4v. The radio didn't like that – cw had 'chirp' on the signal. Hmmm.....where's my 14.7v that I started out with? These new cars have an Intelligent Battery System that doesn't 'waste energy' in order to meet the EPA gas mileage targets. What's going on? This is the same setup from the previous Malibu. Same power cord. Same radio. Nothing different.

Three days, 1270.4 miles indicated – 4 new park units 'activated'. Some car 'bugs' found but overall car was great – nice and smooth and zips along even with the small engine. The tach goes up to 8000 rpm and if you stomp on it, like in passing truck, it will quickly wind up to 6000 rpm. Whew! Car indicated 29.7 mpg despite at least 8 hours idling in the parking lots. Tires are designed for 35 psi cold – so you don't get an 'ultra cushy' ride. Still not bad.

Thanks to Gene, K5GE and Terry, WQ7A, got a Double Diamond in every county along the way. It will be a long time before anyone gets that award -hi hi – but might as well be working on it. Meanwhile, I'm enjoying the NPOTA activations and getting on the road to put out some counties for the folks!

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Post trip report – 3 days later I go to back the car out of the garage to make some voltage measurements. Car screams at me 'low tire pressure'. Sure enough, the car system says right rear tire is at 17psi – way low. I have a little compressor I carry in the truck – so filled the tire back up to 35 psi – held air – must be slow leak. Five miles away is a Discount Tire place – I do my tire business there. They find a nice piece of stone embedded in tread – fortunately fixable – and likely a 'souvenir' from the flint quarry area! Only 1320 miles on the car and one flat tire!

Oh, speaking of tires – new cars DO NOT COME with spare tires. You get a little tire sealant/inflator package instead. That likely saves them ten pounds and these days every pound counts toward making those EPA numbers for mileage. Maybe that sealant/inflator will work, maybe not. I paid extra to get a real spare tire – a donut- and jack and handle. With my trips often way out in the boonies, I'm a lot happier having a real spare tire. The first thing AAA asks you after membership number when you call for help is 'Do you have a spare tire?'. Even if you have the tire inflator, you need to get to place to get tire fixed pronto – it's just an interim job and won't work on sidewall nails or large cuts in tire. Now I have both – heh heh. If I recall right, the '09 Malibu

had two tire problems - one a nail in a sidewall – tire ruined – and another a 1 inch cut in the tread – that tire was toast too – and it was a Sunday. Try finding a tire store on a Sunday out in the boonies! Not sure the sealant/inflator would have solved either one.

Minnesota QSO Party

N0IJ Mobile 887 QSO

A very pleasant day to travel 712 miles from home to home (525 miles during the contest, the rest to and from). No big problems with equipment--K3 and screwdriver on top of my Outback. Everything temporary and operate with laptop and paddle on a bean bag type lap table--K3 sticking out of the glove box. Huge thanks to the folks who followed us around and made this possible.

Although we had snow for the trip home from the finish, during the contest, roads were perfect--thankfully. No mobile guy can make things work this well without a great driver, and I certainly have that with my long time friend, Terry, W0TVD.

He kept us within a couple minutes of schedule for the entire 10 hours even with me hollering for a quick stop at a county line to tend to the faithful! Thanks to all for the QSO's. John, N0IJ

K0PC mobile - 851 QSO

First, my thanks to Greg K0GW for driving for me this year. This whole mobile circus doesn't work without a good driver.

We plotted a route to west central Minnesota this year to make sure all the counties were covered by mobile operators. The weather was great with just a light overcast and temps in the upper 30s. Not bad for February in Minnesota. Just to let you know how quickly things can turn, there were blizzard warnings out for some counties in our route for Sunday.

We had good luck with the mobile setup for most of the day. But late in the afternoon N1MM froze up a couple of times, requiring a reboot to get going again. I think this is caused by the USB cable that handles both rig control and keying. I have a few ideas for the next outing. Overall a very good day.

Thanks to everyone who rode along with us and to the MN Wireless Association for sponsoring this event.

73,
Pat K0PC

N0HJZ – mobile – SSB 1274Q

Thanks to everyone who followed me around into the 29 counties! It was a thrill to work everyone!

I didn't think conditions were great on 20M this year. I still made my third highest QSO total, but I was about 200 Q's behind last year.

Thanks again!

Rich N0HJZ

AD0DX – mobile 100 cw 300 ssb

My wife and I came up MN for the MNQP, stopping along the way to also do some NPOTA activations. We left Kansas City on Friday and stopped along the Missouri River for the Lewis and Clark Trail (TR09) and then we stopped at Ponca State Park in Nebraska which is in the Missouri Natl Rec River, WR05.

This is my second qso party using my Ford Ranger. Previously I had used my Chevy Venture, which was nice due to the large metal roof. But engine noise got worse and worse and I had to retire it.

We did a simple route covering only 12 counties so that we could spend two

hours at Pipestone National Monument MN61 for NPOTA doing a dual activation. Currently I have two Hustler verticals with mag mounts, one for cw and one for phone. I can only use one at a time; the one in the bed of the truck has a high swr and I can't transmit with it.

So for most of the day I was operating cw or phone. I started out on cw, switching between 20 and 40.

Things were going pretty smoothly until about 1pm when we witnessed a rollover on the highway and stopped to offer assistance. The driver was fine but we lost about 45 min which resulted in us skipping Lincoln county.

The staff at the Pipestone Natl Monument were very friendly and we met Cory N0CEK who was operating there all day. We also met another ham at the office who sponsored my wife and I while visiting the monument and saved us the \$7 entrance fee; thanks! (sorry but I missed his call).

My score is approximate; I made two separate logs, one while mobile in the MNQP and a separate log for NPOTA to upload to LOTW. Overall I had about 400 q's. I probably should have spent more time on 40m to get a few more mults.

Thanks to everyone for the q's both from MN also while operating NPOTA.

I also want to say thanks to everyone who waited for me while I changed the computer to a new county, gave my wife directions and waited until we passed out of some bad electrical noise along the road. We stopped in Walnut Grove (Little House on the Prairie) for a food break around noon and the electrical noise there was terrible.

All cw was sent by hand or using the memories on my K3. I really need to get my WinKeyer back up and running so that I can crank my speed up to 32 / 34 and get some better rates going.

On the way back to Kansas City we stopped at the Mormon Trail Center in Nebraska to activate TR08 to activate NPOTA. Beautiful location and I went inside to get permission to operate and also got a short tour and history lesson. Very friendly staff here.

73's and hope to work you in the OKQP in a few weeks.

Ron, AD0DX

W0ZQ mobile - 725 cw 38 ssb QSO

It was a nice February day in Minnesota with temperatures in the upper 20's. Not too bad. This year I ran 11 counties as a solo-op starting from my driveway in not-very-rare Hennepin county and ending the contest in rare Houston county in far SE Minnesota. My aging Toshiba netbook, running N1MM classic, flawlessly logged yet another another 725 CW qso. I need to write those guys a nice reliability report regarding the high quality of the F1, F2, F3, and Enter keys. Thanks for all the Q's. See you in the WiQP March 13. 73, Jon

N8II - fixed - WV - 106 cw 88 ssb mults 75

Congratulations to Tom, N2CU for a truly outstanding performance with the sweep and the LP record, great operating job!

Hats off to the mobiles! On phone, Craig KC0DMF has improved his operating and provided quite a few mults along with Mr. 14256, Rich N0HJZ (always Q5 despite some QRM, consistently S9). Jan, W9FZ was always loud, but missed her for a while. CW mobile activity seemed a bit less than years past, but especially Neo N0EO put in a lot of time on 20 making Q's easy. Conditions on 20 were as near to perfect to MN the whole day as you could possibly hope for, SSB mobiles S9+! I could tell Pat K0PC was focusing on 40, but was there on 20 in most of his counties. Jon W0ZQ was loud even on 80 M and Jim N0UR, and John N0IJ were easy Q's all day. Thanks to the CW guys for giving 20 phone a try at times too! Overall, phone activity on 20 was quite good, always room for more ops. I was first through on the 20 M CW pile ups 90% of the time and about 75% SSB, nice condx!

On the negative side, quality of operating especially on phone has declined. MN ops are almost too polite, please keep in mind others are WAITING to work you, be brief! 15 never opened to MN, just weak scatter, was lucky to work 3 stations. 40 was pretty dismal, struggled around 23Z to copy one SSB station for about 90 seconds.

Two stations operated from NP areas which really boosted their QSO total. I hope I helped the MN ops out a bit. It takes a lot of fortitude to run around the state in mid winter. Here we had 40 inches of snow January 22nd and you would have thought there was a real disaster, no school 6 days (10 calendar days!), no garbage collection 6 days, despite clear roads toward the end. And the mail could not make it down I-70 from Baltimore to here for several days.

Thanks for the
QSO's.

73, Jeff

W3DYA - fixed TX - 43 cw 38 mults

N2CU - NY 213 cw 123 ssb 87 mults

Wow. That was one for the history books. The mobiles did a bang up job as usual, keeping me changing bands and spinning the VFO like a mad man. QSO leaders N0IJ 38, K0PC 31, N0HJZ 27, N0UR-W0ZQ-KC0DMF 19, N0EO 17, KE0TT 9, AD0DX 8, W9FZ and maybe a few others.

With time running out I was at 85 counties. I need WRI and COO. Oh well, as I said last year, I'm resigned to NEVER getting a sweep in this contest, having finished with 85 or 86 several times. Then I hear K0PC in WRI. His good ears pick me out right away and my adrenaline starts pumping. One to go. With about 15 minutes to go there was N0EO (I think) in, what's that, COO? Could it be? Nope. KOO... I kept hoping for that extra dit in his exchange but for naught.

20m went dead and I may have missed N0HJZ in one of his last counties. That's a bummer. I did another sweep of 80 and 40m and then N0IJ is there, working a pileup. I listen for his exchange... JOHN COO! OMG. John has a unique ability to pick my call out of the masses and at 23:50 I work him for the sweep. My first ever in the MNQP. I was so excited at that point it didn't matter if I made another QSO. Well, I did make a few more anyway and added an insurance QSO with John on 80m.

Hmmm, my score looks to be much better than last year so I check the MWA website and find it is a new LP record, assuming nobody else bests me. Cool beans.

A really, really big thank you to all my friends in Minnesota for making this a most enjoyable day. You guys put on one heck of a party.

N1CC -fixed TX 70 cw 80 ssb 66 mults

At the start of the contest it looked like radio conditions would be ideal. By mid-day I knew that 80/40 were going long and already too long to work MN from North Texas...27 contacts on 80/40 with very watery-weak signals here. 20 Held up nicely, and the one QSO on 15M was a surprise.

The many mobiles made hunting good fun. 10 Mobiles, 61 total contacts N0HJZ (16), N0UR(11), W0ZQ(9), K0PC(6), N0EO(4), KC0DMF(3)plus AD0DX, W9FZ, and W0PNA with (2) each. Most of the mobiles were consistantly stronger than "home" stations.

WN4AFP - fixed SC - 65 cw 15 ssb 45 mults

What QP fun! This was my best effort so far in the MNQP! 20m was my only option during the day and sigs were weak from MN to SC, but I still made Qs. I had some SWR issues on 20m phone and later on 40m. Special thanks to all the mobile ops who heard me many times.. N0HJZ, N0UR, AD0DX, K0PC, W0ZQ, N0EO, KE0TT and N0IJ. Both 20m and 40m was difficult because other stations, like N2CU, were very loud into SC and MN. This QP testifies that the more mobiles on the air the more activity...never a dull moment in this one. Hope to do even better next year. 73s Dave WN4AFP

N4PN - fixed - GA - 129 cw 103 ssb 80 Mults

KE0TT - rover - 271 cw

K3/10 at 5 watts to a 66' inverted vee up 25' at the center, and fed with window line and a tuner. Lots of activity, especially as it got later in the day. Thanks for the fun! Was active from 5 counties, which keeps things moving, at least for this op. Thanks also for your great copy of my QRP out there. 73,

and C U next time. Dan, ke0tt

Book Report of the Month

Murder by QRM

This month it's a current book – one originally published in 1998 by the ARRL. The title is Murder by QRM. This is one of a series by Walker A Tompkins – who also wrote SOS at Midnight, CQ Ghost Ship, DX Brings Danger, Death Valley QTH, and Grand Canyon QSO.

The story starts out as Tommy, K6ATX, is contacted by NASA for a special mission. Seems he has the unique qualifications of anyone available to solve a critical situation that they have – top secret – with a short time fuse.

It seems NASA has lost 3 launch vehicles in 3 weeks out of Vandenberg, CA. Somehow the rockets keep blowing up just after launch and likely someone has figured out how to either jam or find the self destruct codes for the launch vehicles and command them to blow themselves up. NASA is set to launch a space shuttle from this base in just 10 days, so time is short

Tommy has backpacked all over the wildlife reserve and limited access areas to the east of the launch site – where signals have been traced – but NASA is unable to find the bad guys, or their radio equipment. No motorized transport is allowed into the wilderness areas and there are no roads.

Tommy has had some experience with hang gliders, but gets a two day intense course in using military powered gliders – which will allow them to cover the 100 square miles from the air. While on the first day of doing that, his partner and instructor is shot dead - by a suspected drug grower – of which there are dozens and dozens in the back country.

So it is off on foot. Tommy stops by an old friend Trapper Joe out in the boonies. He pumps him for information about any others who may be doing things but gets limited answers – but some. Next he heads for caves high up on 6000 foot mountains – a good place to hide radio equipment. Trapper Joe follows him there – and is shot dead at the cave entrance by a sniper. Things are definitely heating up.

Well, cutting out a lot of the adventure, Tommy finally discovers the radio location where the self-destruct signals are being sent – and the guy doing it – who turns out to be the CEO of the company that provides the units to the government. Unfortunately Tommy gets captured – fortunately he escapes and finds the relay site to get the signal to the launch site. Unfortunately he gets captured again....but does manage to foil the bad guys attempt to blow up the shuttle at launch.

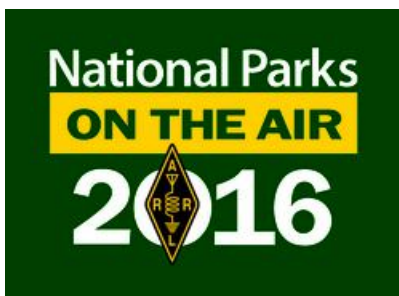
There's some ham radio in there along the way, but not as much as could be. A couple hour read.

Found my copy at a hamfest and it will be up for sale at the next one I have a flea market table.

National Parks on the Air

National Parks on the Air Update

Statistics from the first month of National Parks on the Air ([NPOTA](#)) prove that the event is a big hit nationwide! In January, 243 of the 483 eligible NPOTA units had at least one activation, with 606 total qualified activations. More than 72,100 NPOTA contacts were uploaded to Logbook of The World ([LoTW](#)) in January.



The top three most-activated units are all trails: The

Appalachian National Scenic Trail, TR01 (15); the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail, TR23 (10); and the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, TR11 (9).

The top three units attracting the greatest number of contacts were the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, TR11 (1977); Hot Springs National Park, NP30 (1781), and Cape Cod National Seashore, SS03 (1563).

With an expected uptick in activity as the weather gets warmer across the country, 1 million NPOTA QSOs are not out of the realm of possibility.

For the week of February 4-10, 28 different NPOTA units are scheduled to be activated, including the Fort Pulaski National Monument in Georgia. See the NPOTA Activations Calendar for the complete listings.

[Details](#) about these and other activations coming up can be found on the NPOTA Activations calendar.

Keep up with the latest NPOTA news on [Facebook](#).

Above courtesy of ARRL Newsletter of 2/4/16

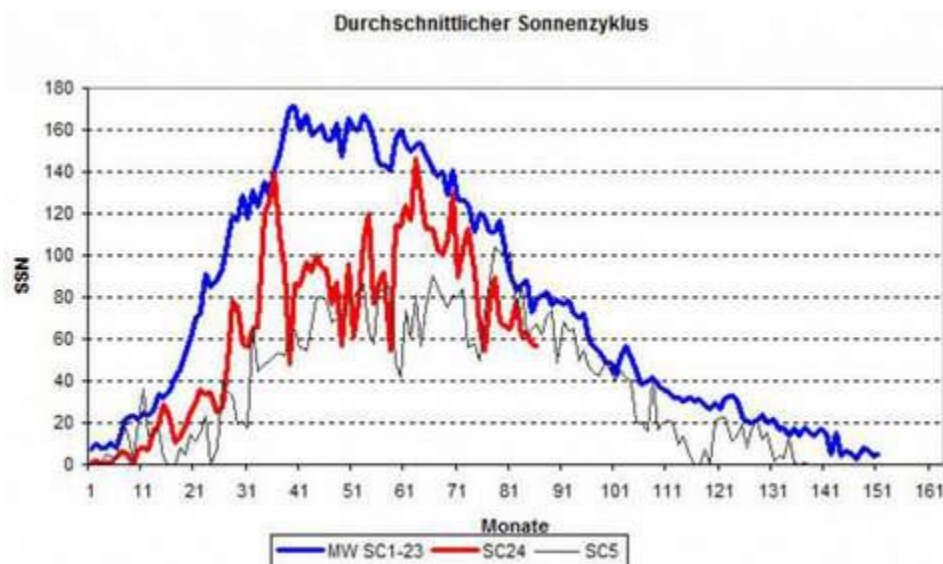
Sunspot Report

Solar cycle 24 activity continues to be lowest in nearly 200 years

Anthony Watts / 18 hours ago February 11, 2016

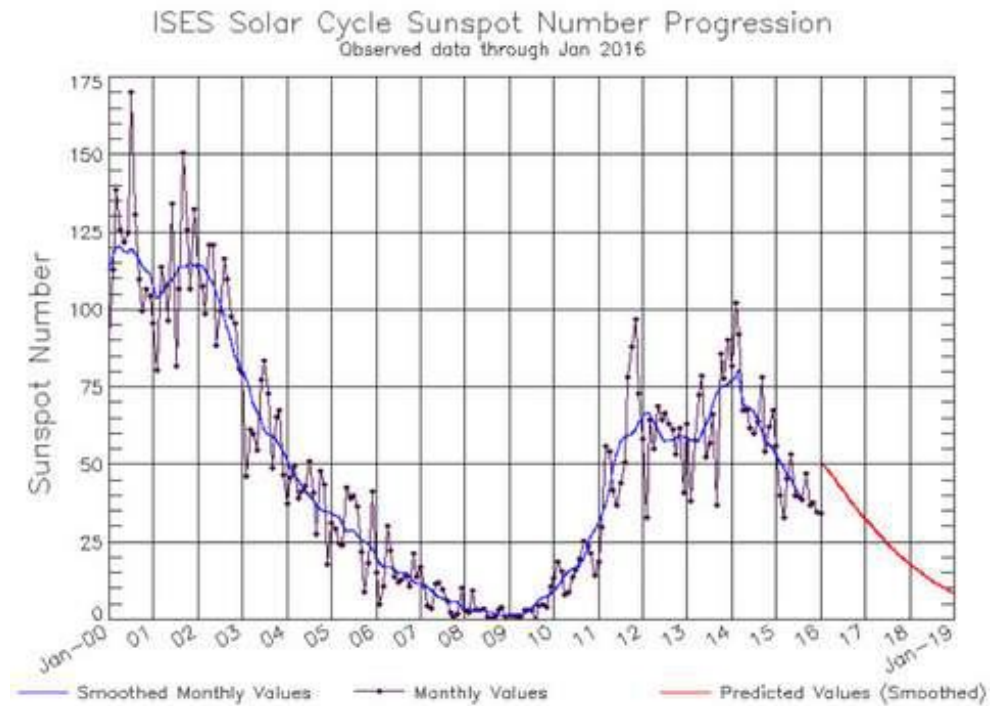
It has been a couple of months since WUWT has checked in on the progress of solar cycle 24. Right now, the sun is in “cue ball” mode, with no large visible sunspots

[The sun was] rather quiet in January. The determined solar sunspot number (SSN) was 56.6, which is 71% of the mean this far into the period, calculated using the 23 previously measured solar cycles.



As you can see from the plots in Figure 1, the current level of activity of solar cycle 24 seems close to that of solar cycle number 5, which occurred beginning in May 1798 and ending in December 1810 (thus falling within the Dalton Minimum). The maximum smoothed sunspot number (monthly number of sunspots averaged over a twelve-month period) observed during the solar cycle was 49.2, in February 1805 (the second lowest of any cycle to date, as a result of being part of the Dalton Minimum), and the minimum was zero.(ref: Wikipedia)

Below is what the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center has offered this month. Sunspot count continues below the red prediction line. 10.7 cm radio flux is about at the prediction level, and the Ap geomagnetic index continues to rise, suggesting that the solar magnetic dynamo might be a bit more active, but that activity isn't translating into increased sunspots or radio flux.



Source: <http://wattsupwiththat.com/2016/02/11/solar-cycle-24-activity-continues-to-be-lowest-in-nearly-200-years/>

National Parks on the Air II

Some pics from around the country from National Park units

Ron, AD0DX, was on in the MN QSO Party – then ran a NPOTA unit while there.



AD0DX – Pipestone National Monument

Joining in the Fun with NPOTA

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

Step 1 – Register for an LoTW account

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

certificate' on them.

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

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

You'll find this page

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

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

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

When you go out mobile, you're not at home and will need to set up a separate 'station location' for each park unit 'activated'.

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

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

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

Now, the important thing is when you upload via the TSQL 'upload' , you need to be sure to 'sign it' with the location from which the contacts were made. (you need to set up the 'station location' before you can upload a log). Let us say you went to Big Bend National Park – NP04. You must set up the station location for 'Big Bend' before the

upload so you can select it as the location to sign it with. Otherwise, folks will get your home location and not be smiling.

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

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

Using NFJP to upload

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

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

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

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

Vermont QSO Party

Stations were on. Reports of upwards of 17 QSOs and 7 multipliers on SSB were reported on the 3830 contest reflector. 10-12 contacts and 6 multipliers appeared on CW.

N4CD caught a couple on CW.

From 3830:

OM2VL 21 cw 25 ssb 7 digital

My 3rd VT QP and my best score. Unfortunately on Sunday very limited time operation (only few minutes). I am sure I missed stations on 20/15m and maybe some multipliers. Thanks a lot for all VT stations who called me and was so kind to make with me QSY to another band and mode. Thanks also for 7 QSO with club station W1NVT (160, 80, 40, 20m SSB and 40, 15m CW) and 8 QSO with W1JXN (80, 40, 20, 15m CW and 20, 15m SSB and 20, 15m RTTY).

73, Laci OM2VL

N4CD vs The New Car

As noted above, the N4CD set up in the new Malibu was in trouble. The car had two steady states for voltage – 12.6 to 12.7 volts and 14.5 volts. Almost nothing in between and most of the time it sat right around 12.7 volts. Folks told me I had a chirpy CW signal at times.

For the past umpteen years, I have always connected a pair of wires from the radio up to the engine compartment, where I attached them to the battery terminals. That always seemed to work and eliminated ground loops that can cause 'whine' in the radio on receive and transmit.

New cars are DIFFERENT. In order to meet ever increasing EPA mandated mileage targets, manufacturers are putting more and more technology into the cars. Now you have what they call an 'Intelligent Battery System'. (IBS). Unlike old days where the battery was charged and charged and the voltage sat at 13.8 or so day in and day out, now the cars quickly recharge any drain from the battery on start up, and then take it to essentially 'open terminal' condition.

There is a sensor in the negative lead of the battery to ground. It's a 'Hall Effect' sensor

around the fat negative lead from the minus terminal of the battery to a ground point on the chassis. Every device on the car has the return lead to ground.



Sensor on the fat negative lead

With that system, then, the IBS knows how much current is flowing out of the battery and how much to put back in to maintain 'full charge' and not an electron more. The system also seems to think that about 12.6v is perfectly fine to run all the accessories on the car, including lights, radio, heater blower, defrosters, power steering, radiator fan, etc. However, you will see 14.7v when you first turn the car on, and at other miscellaneous moments as you drive along.

If you hook your heavy negative lead to the battery, you bypass the system and likely your battery will slowly run downhill. The car system won't be charging it – since it doesn't know the current is disappearing.

I did some measuring. Seems I had too much voltage drop in my parallel number 14 wires. I hooked up an MFJ 4416B battery booster, but it really didn't make transmit any better. In fact, it blew a lot of 30 amp fuses. If you want 20 amps of current at 14v, what it was set at, and your booster only has 11v at the input, it's going to be pulling over 25 amps. 280 watts out ($14\text{v} \times 20\text{ amp}$ for the IC706) vs that amount of power plus more (94% efficiency) or over 300w into the MFJ. Well, at that point it's pulling near 30 amps, the voltage drop is 2v in the cable.....and with the car sitting at 12.6, that is 10.6v into the converter. This isn't going to work! Something has got to give.

I tried adjusting the MFJ booster down to 13v. Who needs 14v at the radio? The dang pot crapped out as soon as I tried to turn it. Double dang...one of those teeny 1/8th inch by 1/8 inch board mount units you need a magnifying glass to see, no less figure out how to replace. Sent it back to MFJ with a nasty note. I've had it sitting on the shelf for years. If you are going buy one, I'd recommend the NJ8X one over this. I was getting frustrated.

Finally I get inspired, ditch the old ICOM standard power cable, and go over to the local Car Toys big audio store a few miles away and talk to them about running some heavy wires. They always use a short fat ground wire (3 feet) with their audio equipment. For a 300w stereo amp, they run a number 10 wire. OK....sounds good to me. I pay them to run a fat #10 wire from the positive terminal just before the big fuse block – to the rear passenger seat area. They put in a 3 foot ground to somewhere in the side channel and both wires come out. I spliced on an old 18 inch section of power cable with the six pin molex connector, and that was that.

Seemed to have fixed the 'chirp'. The short fat ground wire eliminates voltage drop there. I do have a fuse in the positive lead at the battery and might add one back in the ground lead although I don't think that is as critical now. Previously you'd want a negative fuse so if the big fat wire came loose at the chassis end, you would not be providing the entire negative return for the car. Let's say that lead came loose. You go to start the car, and if your radio was grounded by the mount, or antenna coax connection, 200-300 amps of current would try to flow.....and you'd be melting things. Smoke! Fire! Now, if that ground lead comes loose....well, everything is dead. The starter isn't connected to the neg lead of the battery anymore. Thus no need for a fuse in negative lead.

No one gave me a 'chirp' report on the last trip so maybe things are 'back to normal'.

- - - -

This car also has a 'start stop' system. When you come to a complete stop at a stop sign or light, with your foot on the brake...the engine shuts down. When you take your foot off the brake.....it instantly starts. Very very quickly. There's a Li Iron P battery in the rear trunk wall – a small but powerful one – couple pounds. It's the start stop battery. Once you stop, the car voltage starts dropping like a rock....it will hit 12v after 30 seconds with the a/c onand restart the car. If you got most things off in the car, it will

go a minute or two before restarting due to low voltage. You can defeat it by taking your foot off the brake momentarily at the stop light – it will start up and not repeat that cycle until you slow down again. Voltage goes back up to 12.7.

Otherwise, other than birdie on 7056.5 , the car is beautifully quiet – and no issues with RF getting into car systems. At least none I've found in 4000 miles of county hunting/park putting out!

On the Road with N4CD II

N4CD was pumped up with the NPOTA program. I'd put out 4 park units in TX in January – but there were a slew of them remaining. The new car needed some further break in and checking out – so it was off on a week long trip around TX and NM to new parks and new counties for Double Diamond. The weather was supposed to be great with no storms or rain in sight. What not to like for mid month February?

I didn't even know that some of these parks existed or that there was a reason to go to them! Us County Hunters usually only worry about 'rare counties' and running all the counties – and no so much 'sightseeing' here, there and everywhere. Well, sometimes we take 'vacations' from putting counties! After 20 years of county hunting, I know all the counties and roughly where each one is from Piscataquis Maine to Alpine, CA. Ask me about the Theodore Roosevelt birthplace and I hit a brick wall. Something new to learn!

Saturday 2/13

I headed out on Saturday - which avoided the hassle of rush hour in the Metroplex going south through the bowels of Dallas and suburbs. No sweat on a Saturday – and zipped on down I-35 for five hours down to San Antonio (Bexar County) to run the San Antonio Missions. Even made it through Austin TX on I-35 with no hassles. That's usually a mess.

San Antonio Missions - This is also an NPOTA 'two-fer' – the equivalent of a county line where you get to put out 2 for the price of one! The Spanish built many missions across the southern US – out as far as California – to spread 'the word' and subjugate the Native Americans. In the San Antonio area there are several, but the largest is Mission San Jose. This is now a National Historic Park – HP-37 in the NPOTA lingo - where every park, national seashore, national monument has a park unit designator.

Also part of the park system are 'trails' and 'wild and scenic rivers', preservation areas, Monuments, and recreation areas as well. One of the major trails from Mexico City to northwest Louisiana passes through this mission so you get to run TR-20 – El Camino Real de los Tejas together. Actually at the time, it was one of the 'royal roads'. This is going back 200-300 years. You can run the trail if you can find out where it is along the entire length but much of it now is on private property. At the missions it is everywhere since the entire area was used.

Wow! The place is busy with 150 cars or so in the parking lots and people milling all about – it's 70 deg and sunny outside and a weekend. The place is huge – the mission is tens of acres behind a masonry wall. I put out the park – 200 quick QSOs in 2 hours – whew! I stop by the visitor center to get my Passport book stamped. If you're a senior citizen you can get your Senior Park pass that gets you in free to all the parks. Otherwise, some of them have fees for access – most after you get to the visitor center. If you never leave the parking lot, you can probably even not have to pay if you're under 60. At least in the winter since most entrance gates are unmanned. The pass gets everyone in the car in free, too. That worked out well – never had to cough up a dime.



N4CD at HP39 and TR-20 Bexar County
San Antonio Missions

I didn't see a handy park sign that I could snap with the car it, so this the the car with the mission in the background. You can take a mile hike through the mission grounds. I'll bet most folks never knew this was here if you didn't live in the area. You learn something new everyday if you try.

Soon it was time to zip on down to the next destination – Padre Island National Seashore and the motel in Corpus Christi for the night. It's a couple hour drive from San Antonio.

I was a bit behind schedule – checked into the Super 8 mid city motel in Corpus. The fellow at the desk said it was about 20-25 minutes to get to Padre Island NP – so even though it was 4:20pm I headed out to see if I could get in a short run. It took 40 minutes to get to the park – actually a National Seashore – on the north island. Quickly I went to 20cw and whipped off 60 QSOs in 40 minutes. The park visitor center closes at 5pm so that didn't happen and I didn't get my official park stamp in my Passport book – but of course, did take the obligatory N4CD at the sign picture. This is the new Percy Pic – hi hi!

Padre Island runs for a couple hundred miles – the north one – and the south one. You can easily get to the south island but have to drive north for many miles to get back into the 'park' national seashore. If you'll recall, not that many years ago, Barry, W9UCW and WB9NUL, Joyce, held the mini in Harlingen (Hidalgo County) . A few times we

went out dolphin watching right of Padre Island. For NPOTA credit you've got to be officially in the NP unit.



Padre Island National Seashore SS09
Kleberg County TX

Dinner was at Denny's. They've got some new 'extreme skilletts' that are quite delicious – and healthy – at least you get veggies! Then back to the Super 8 – and it was getting very dark. N4CD doesn't do 'dark' these days if I can help it. Slept well. Two down, a bunch more to go. Well, actually 3 since one was a 'two fer'.

N4JT, Jim, was also in TX putting out counties on cw and digital.

Sunday 2/14

After a waffle at the Super 8 free breakfast, it was time to zip on down to the tip of Texas at Brownsville – Cameron County – to get to the next Park. I ran through the counties putting them out on CW and SSB at times. Sometimes there was a net on 14324 – other times it was just QRM from .325.

Several hours later I reached the tip of TX and went to the Palo Alto Battlefield. Never really knew this site existed – not much reason to go there – but it was a NP unit and N4CD could 'activate it' and give out contacts. I wasn't the first, and won't be the last, to wander through there. It's not too far off the main highways if you are near Brownsville, TX. This is the site of an important battle back in the early 1800s. The tension between

the US – and what would later be US 'states' was brewing. Remember the Alamo? The Texans won that set of skirmishes after the Alamo defeat, but when Texas declared independence in 1836 and claimed large areas of territory, Mexico got upset and it took another war to resolve it. The victory at Palo Alto by the US and Texan forces cleared the way for the invasion of Mexico by the US and finally resolved the issue. Mexico lost. Texas became a state in 1846. The visitor center has a good display of the chronology of the history of the area for the relevant period from both the Spanish and US/Texan position. Interesting.



N4CD at HP33 – Cameron County
Palo Alto Battlefield

When I put out the park, I also announce the county – hopefully someone will spot on W6RK in a spot like “N4CD 14271 Cameron County (HP33)”. Often, I'll run on 14324 if there is a net going, then QSY down the band to the 14250-280 area. I don't want a hour long pile up on 14324.

I usually park far from the visitor center – many of them have theaters and likely long connecting speaker wires and who knows what electronics in them – so it is better to be safe and be a couple hundred feet away so there is no unpleasant surprises. The last thing we need to do is upset the National Park folks when many are 'activating' the parks.

Here's a sign I'll bet no one has seen in the north half of the country! It's on the way out

of the Palo Alto Battlefield.



Horned Lizard Crossing

Didn't see any. After two hours, it was time to head on to the next destination many hundreds of miles away. The car traveled along the bottom of the tip of TX – hitting the counties – with a few zigs and zags to catch even more as I rounded the curve and headed northwest up to Laredo TX for the night at another Super 8 motel. Got there about 5pm, checked in. Traffic in Laredo is horrendous – day and night! I headed out to the Golden Corral which was about a 1/2 mile north but it took 20 minutes to get there. Once there – it has a giant parking lot – I found a long line to get in. Think twice as long or three times as long as the Golden Corral at Dayton during the hamfest. It took 45 minutes to get in. On weekends, the GC has 'premium weekends' with prime rib roast beef, salmon and more – at a premium price of \$14 plus tax. It was good and I filled up on meat and veggies and fruit. Half mile back to motel that took 5 minutes. Slept well.

Monday 2/15

It would still be hours and hours to get to the next park unit at Del Rio in Val Verde County – the Amistad Recreation Area. Whoa....where's the water? The lake is down

90%. Water is missing. You can see the bottom over much of the lake – with no water. This area needs a couple major hurricanes to come in and dump 3 or 4 feet of rain – each – to fill it back up. Meanwhile, there's not a lot of recreating going on. It is one of the park units – so I got set and put it out for the folks. At this stage of the game, you can quickly zip off 150 plus QSOs in two hours. As the year progresses, many will already 'have' the parks and the pile ups will decrease.



N4CD Amistad Recreation Area – RC01
Val Verde County

When the lake is full, it's full of boaters and swimmers. Now , smugglers still try to use the 'water route' to get people and contraband into the US – it's right on the border.

Stopped by the visitor center to get the stamp, sign the visitor log and chat with the friendly lady ranger. I mentioned that I had 'activated' the park as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the park service. She mentioned several other 'ham radio operators' had been by.

After a good 2 hour plus run, plus the visit, N4CD headed northwest a couple hundred miles to Pecos TX in Reeves County TX. Ouch – motels are expensive out this way! \$100 with tax at a Knights Inn. Least expensive place I could find. Owner said 'the oil folks' have run up the prices. Ouch again! Dinner at the Old Mill BBQ – very good. Slept well. I was getting 'worn out' every day from the runs and driving. Full days.

Tuesday 2/16

Finally I'd get to areas with more parks and less driving between them! After the expensive night in Pecos Texas the car headed toward Carlsbad Caverns to put out NP10 'on the air'. It was a short TX drive at 75 mph – and soon I was at the park. You go in and you wonder if the road to the visitor center will take you back into a canyon where RF doesn't get out. What a surprise – you go up and up to a great place to run the park/county!

The elevators at the park that take you down into the caverns are down for maintenance so few visitors were there. You have to walk down and back up 55 stories now – so only some very hardy soles were stopping by. No problem – nearly empty parking lot, no QRN and a great run.



N4CD at Carlsbad National Park NP10
Eddy NM

The run went well with 200Qs. This has been put out a few times already – but the pileup went on for 2 hours. Fun! Busy! I had to usually 'go by numbers' to sort out

the pile up. You could have 200Q on SSB and maybe 30 or 40 on cw. I dropped in to the visitor center, signed the visitor log and got my Passport stamp. A 'triple' for verification.

No time to waste! Not too far away is Guadalupe Mountains National park – a short hour drive away. These are some unusual hills that pop out of the flat Texas terrain going up over 7000 AMSL. Of course, the base elevation is 5000 feet so they aren't giant mountains like in CO where they go up five to 8,000 feet above the base elevation. Still, it is a great break from the flat monotony of west Texas. Dry - -dry as a bone out here with most places getting under 12 inches of rain a year.



Guadalupe National Park NP27
Culberson County

Phil, WA6TE, one of the big activators, was following behind me in his motor home. He was 60 miles north at Carlsbad.....where I had been – and would be heading to Guadalupe in a few hours. We never did meet. Worked him 'park to park' a few times.

Good run but no time to waste. Dropped by the visitor center – signed the log, got the

stamp and had the pic. Time was a wasting and I was headed to see if I could get permission to run a 'sensitive site' – Chamizal in the El Paso area.

You leave this NP and it is 130 miles to the next gas station going west! There's no gas by the NP either. When you are out in west TX and WY and other rural places, always fill up the tank at night or in the morning before you start out – and when the gas gauge is down to half – fill it up again! You really don't want to be running out of gas out here in the middle of nowhere!

The speed limit is 75 on most west TX roads so I zip along until the suburbs of El Paso then it bogs down a bit. I arrive at the Chamizal Monument – a listed 'sensitive site'. I got a message from Sean, KX9X, one of the head NPOTA folks at ARRL HQ and he advised strongly against running this park at this time. Darn! Hundreds of miles and no joy.

I went in and talked with the head ranger for the better part of an hour. Wasn't going to happen and they were in their 'process' of coming up with a 'procedure' to 'allow' ham radio operations from the 'monument'. Dang there was a 150 car parking lot, nearly empty, 300 feet from the visitor center. Should be no problem but they brought up over and over again 'border patrol' radio and 'near the border. Heck, the interstate was one mile north – with hundreds of folks, including hams transmitting – and trucker CB'ers with their KW splattering amps, plus of course a few hundred local hams at 1.5KW max power and 10db gain antennas.

Wasn't going to happen today, and the Pope was arriving the next day across the border in Juarez so they were all in panic mode. Another time or another mobile, but not N4CD for this National Monument. Disappointment. Only real glitch on the trip.

I sat across from the entrance gate across the street in a parking lot and put out 'El Paso County' for the county hunters. No black helicopters or dozens of immigration/border patrol types came by. 300 feet from the parking lot where 'ham radio is not currently authorized' and won't count toward NPOTA credit.



Looking at the 'forbidden one'
Chamizal - El Paso County

Nearby you can find a stopping point on another of the Spanish royal roads.....this one TR-17 – Camino Royal del Tierra Adentro. It went through the San Ysleta Mission now in San Antonio area and wanders along I-25 following the river banks. Whoa...try saying that over and over on SSB in each exchange! Well, I ran it on cw only. Sort of bummed out and frustrated but it was another park unit activated. Just had to send TR-17. N4CD is trying to rack up a few points.

For each QSO you need to exchange signal reports and the park unit. Other stations give you a signal report and their state. If you upload to LoTW, it doesn't care anything about signal report or exchanges, just call signs and time plus or minus 15 minutes or so. So if you miss it, don't sweat it.



You'll find signs like this all along the original route or where it crosses the highway. This was a 6.6 mile stretch of the trail you could drive along. This is closeup of the sign.

Time to get a movin! There were lots of new NP's in NM....most of which I had never heard about. Well, I hadn't heard about most of the trails in TX either. Likely you've heard of the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon Trail but there are dozens of others as well. Lots to do and time getting short.

I was heading up to White Sands NM and White Sands National Park and hoped to make it before closing time. Not to be – the GPS lady took me through horrendous congestion – I should have kicked her in the butt and ignored her on this leg of the trip. Lost a good hour. Arrived late enough that I just headed into the motel in Alamogordo for the night – Super 8 well reviewed but not the cheapest place there. Still very good and a 'five star' type reviewed place on Trip Advisor – you don't find too many of them with five stars of recommendation. Dinner next door at the Pepper Grill – delicious Salmon and steamed veggies. Fill up the gas tank at night no matter how much or little it takes to be ready in the morning.

You've got to leave a good hour, maybe two if you start a run in a park unit. You'll be

busy. The gates at most of the park units shut at 5pm during the winter. Some have longer hours during the summer months. Slept well. No way to get the 25 miles to the park before closing time today.

Wednesday 2/17

I was up bright and early – had a waffle, cereal, apple, juice and decaf coffee at the Super 8. Then headed out early to get to the White Sands NP at opening time. Dang.....Murphy strikes again. On the NPS page, you'll find a note that 'the highway is sometimes closed due to White Sands Missile Test Range activity'. I'm driving along on a 4 lane divided highway and there are 50 flashing red lights ahead. Accident? Nope...the road is closed for an 'unknown' time period. No explanation other than 'Road Closed'. At least 20 police cars blocking traffic. Looks like Uncle Sam is shooting off some missiles today. I sit for about 40 minutes spinning my wheels going nowhere. So many places to be and stuck waiting for a 'test' to be over. Fortunately.....things ended and the traffic started moving again and I made it the 15-20 miles to the White Sands park and visitor center. Yippee.



Did the Passport thing, showed my Senior Pass, signed the visitor log, got stamp in book.....and I'm set. Talk with ranger and let them know in friendly way their Park has been 'On the Air'.

There are still lots of parks in NM to run. Time to get a movin! This is a 'connect the park' trip and I go till I get tired, the weather changes, or the fun stops. So far so good. Weather is great – actually 10-15 degrees above normal, no precipitation and lots of sun.

The next up are the Salinas Pueblo Missions. I can get there on some back roads – NM 55 for about 50 miles. It's a two lane road with no shoulder and heads to the Gran Quivera – the largest of the three Spanish built missions in the area. Whoa.....that's 50 miles without seeing another car as route 55 goes through the middle of nowhere, to nowhere. You arrive at the entrance to the park – gated – and head on up the park road to a great RF location in the middle of nowhere – nice and quiet at the 'ruins' for the Gran Quivera. This is a large mission – lots of work went into building it in the early 18th century. It was well used for 30-40 years then suddenly abandoned as all the Spanish and all the Native Americans simply disappeared from the area! No one knows for sure why – but maybe something like 10 years of drought conditions. There are many ruins out this way that were used for a long time, then the people suddenly vanished – Mesa Verde in Colorado and Chaco Canyon in NW NM.

All these mission sites are at fairly high altitudes – and hilltops. There are 3 in this area. Gran Quivera is the largest.



Gran Quivera Ruins

There's a nice lady ranger there who noted my car in the lot –and after my run from there – MN65 – I went inside and said hello. It's nearly 40 miles into 'town' from here headed north - and that's a small town, too. I signed the visitor log and commented

“N4CD – National Parks on the Air”. Looks like just a few people a day at this time of year wander this way. Most visit the other smaller sites but right off the main road.

More to go so once again after 2 hours or so it was north to Albuquerque, NM to get to the next park and maybe run it before the sun set.

Right in the middle of the Albuquerque area is the Petroglyph National Monument – a park with lots of hiking trails. Most of the petroglyphs (images and writing on the rock walls) date from 300-700 years ago with some thought to be 2000-3000 years old. The park is a couple square miles of terrain. The main entrance to the visitor center is open till 5pm and I got there at 5:02. The gates were still open so I went in and operated for about 35 minutes. At some point they closed in the 'in' side gate. I didn't want to get locked it so I sat in the road about 400 feet back from the gate – which has big power lines crossing – and nervously watched. I finally decided to head on out – 20M was fading due to late hour – and come back in the morning. Bernalillo County. You need 10 contacts to 'officially activate' a park - I had many times that in the log already.

I looked for a motel and there was a Super 8 about 3 miles away – so that is where headed for the night. Good rates - \$45 including tax. Another 'extreme skillet' at Denny's for dinner - they have 4 or five different ones – with grilled veggies - and slept well. Good weather so far – and wearing tee- shirts and feeling good.

There were just one or two mobiles out there. K0FG was on in MO during the trip as well as K8ZZ for a few days up in MO going all over the place there. A few times I had to QSY to another band or down 2 KHz but most of the time did not have to QSY.

Rick AI5P lives in the Albuquerque area.

Thursday 2/18

Skipped the waffle at the Super 8 – waffled out! - had cereal with cut up apple, juice and decaf coffee....hard boiled egg and some yogurt.

There were two parks up at Santa Fe area– to the north of my current QTH and that's where the car headed. Naturally I was running all the counties as I went through them. Never heard of the parks but you'll see signs for Bandelier Park from 50-60 miles ago – almost like the Wall Drug store – which has signs 200 miles away if you've ever been in South Dakota! Easy to find this park – directions right off the interstate with large signs. I guess it's a real popular destination. I'd find out. Well – it's not exactly 'on the

beaten path'. You wind your way up toward Los Alamos – which is, as you may recall, in the middle of nowhere due to the secrecy needed during WW2 for the atomic bomb Manhattan Project. The location was chosen as the most out of the way isolated place they could easily find. Even today, you have to want to go there as it is not on the interstate.

Well, after a few hours of driving I arrive at Bandelier – see the sign and find a convenient spot to run it.



N4CD at Bandelier Monument
Los Alamos County

I'm zipping along working folks on 20M SSB and who shows up? Why it's Richard, W5IL, who came by to say hello!



Richard, W5IL USCA #1231
Active in NPOTA Program

Richard has been running all over NM – even to the far reaches to places like Chaco Canyon on 15 miles of gravel road – to put out the park units. He's also an active county hunter – cw and SSB.

I handed him the camera and he caught N4CD in the mobile!



Howdy from N4CD

The pileup was raging so there wasn't too much time for an eyeball but it was nice to meet Richard. Bandelier has the remains of cliff dwellings and settlements in the 'valleys'. It's very popular. Even in mid February it was busy.

After the pileup subsided - it seems to come to a quick slowdown – but if you call and call, folks will come out of the woodwork slowly – you decide that's 'good enough' for now. I headed into the visitor center – busy place and lot nearly full and a not great radio location. They even run shuttle buses from other lots to the visitor center! Did the stamp thing, signed the visitor log, talked with the ranger for a few minutes, bought a drink, then it was off again.

There were more places to be and things to do! So many park units -so little time.

Next up was Valles Caldera. You really have to want to go here to get there. It's maybe 15-20 miles west of Bandelier but you won't get there quick! The roads were good but as you drove along later, there was snow on the sides of the road – and the further you went, the more snow. The visitor center at the park is up at 8,500 feet AMSL and the surrounding hills are probably over 9,000. They are snow covered. Here's a few signs on the way there.....to make you consider your trip in the winter time.

It's over the mountains and through the woods – well, up with switchbacks some with 10mph recommended speed and you better be doing not much more.



So far so good. Now, this is a sign I don't want to see too often in the winter time - it's mid February.....



Watch for Snow Plows!

That white stuff is lots of snow – both sides of road but road was clear due to week of 15-20 deg above normal temps. Temps were dropping like a rock as I headed west to the park and the elevation was increasing. It was 60 plus at Bandelier – now it was in the 50s and dropping.

You not only have to worry about snow plows, switchbacks, but a few more caution signs are there:

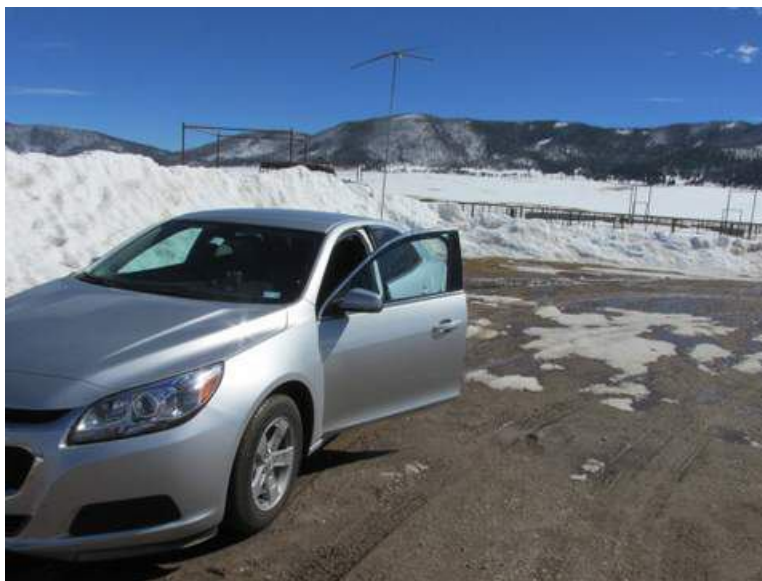


Elk Crossing Area

We don't have too many elk in the home state of TX. Eventually you get to Valles Caldera.....and find the entrance to the visitor center.



I head on in to the visitor center 2 miles down a washboard gravel road – 20-25 mph top speed. This is the lot for the visitor center



N4CD at PV19
Remote – Scenic

There's a six foot wall of snow to the left of the picture. Yuk! 46 degrees outside and the wind is blowing a steady 25-30 mph. It's warm in the car but brutal outside. There's a lady ranger stationed here – bet she has one heck of a commute – and an outhouse – his and hers - for the 'facilities'. Cold, cold, cold inside those! You can freeze your bottom off. Heh heh.

Had a good run. This is an ancient volcanic crater. Spent a good two hours on the radio – then it was time to leave. Did talk with the lady ranger – apparently a few other ham radio ops had been there. She noted that the road into the visitor center was in 'great shape'. (rattled my teeth). Two weeks before it was a foot of hard pack snow and ice and treacherous. Whew! Missed that luckily. The above normal weather had allowed them to scrap it down to the gravel. Got my stamp in the Passport book.

Oh – post trip note. Rick, AI5P was planning on running this park on Tuesday 2/23 – five days after my trip. Well, the weather in Los Alamos was SNOWING that day so he postponed the trip. Likely it was a blizzard up here at the crater.

It's back over the mountain and a half dozen slow slow switchbacks. Road clear so no hassles. Still good weather for my trip. I've been real lucky. Time to move on and get out of NM before my good weather luck expires. Going back seemed easier but still lots of miles to get back to 'anywhere'.

I head back into Santa Fe about 50 miles away and find a Super 8 motel for the night. There's not much to the east in the way of towns or motels for a long long way. Not many restaurants other than fast food and Mexican around – so opt for trying yet another of the Denny's 'extreme skilletts'. Good. Plus if you are an AARP member you get 15% off on the bill. Slept well.

Friday 2/19

There would be three more parks, then I'd zip on home after a week long trip. The first up is Pecos – National Historic Park. Folks have been occupying this area for 10,000 years and now you have the ruins of Spanish missions as well. The Santa Fe trail came through here so you can run a 'two-fer' of HP35 and TR11 giving out both at the same time. I've run the Santa Fe Trail (up in Western OK) but you get more 'points' as an activator if you repeat things on a different day at least 24 hours in between runs.

It's right off the interstate and N4CD was there at 7:45 waiting for the gates to open to the park. No park outside the gates according to the GPS lady so had to wait. Friendly ranger came by in a few minutes and said howdy 'to one of the radio guys going to broadcast their park unit'. All of them are aware of the ARRL program in conjunction with them commemorating 100 years of Park Service. The gates opened at 8am and in I went.



Pecos Historical Park
On the way out – almost forgot the pic!

There's a nice parking lot there. Just about the time I'm done another ranger comes by. Says he's about to retire in six months and moving to the Black Hills, and he might get his ham license. When he was a kid he thought about it but never did. Maybe we'll get him on the air! Nice to have interested rangers in radio – at the NP!

Didn't take the tour of the mission – seen enough of them on the trip! Spent my 2 hours on the radio then it was time to get to the next one. Oh, did get the stamp and signed the visitor log.

Up next was Fort Union – also not far off the interstate. I've been by it a few times but really there was no reason to stop before. Now there is!

This is a fort that was built to protect people traveling on the Santa Fe trail. Naturally, it is a 'two -fer' as well. It served to protect, plus some provisions were available for purchase.



Santa Fe Trail Marker

There's markers for the trail when you are 'on the same route'. The trail wanders near the interstate for dozens of miles in the same valley. Later the railroad would build right along it too.

The fort is out in the middle of nowhere now – but it was a thriving place. Hundreds of wagon loads of military and other supplies came across the trail from the start in MO. Hundreds of wagons headed west in the Gold Rush era.

Fort Union was actually 3 forts. The first was a small one built of logs and rapidly fell apart. There's not much remaining of it. The second fort was a 'star fort' and was used for a few decades. Then the third fort was built similar to many others you might have seen with dozen of barracks buildings, officer quarters, supply depots, and every other facility you needed to support several hundred soldiers. Large wood fence all around.

When the railroads came through in 1891...the fort was abandoned. Today, you can see the ruins of the second fort, and many of the third generation fort buildings are still standing, with some restored.

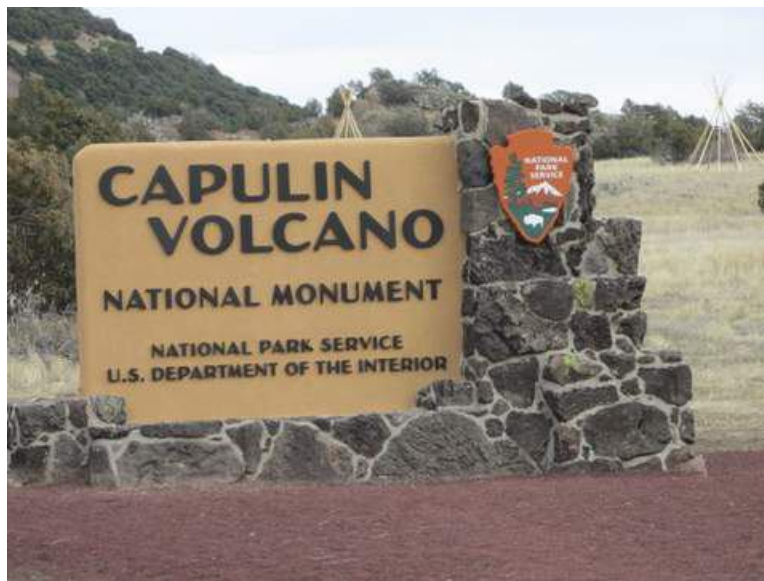


Fort Union Colorado

I did the radio thing – 2 hours of pile up – mostly SSB – then decided it was time to head on out. Didn't take the mile and a half walking tour – seen enough forts lately, too! Hi hi

One more to go before exiting New Mexico on the grand circle tour!

If you continue up Interstate 25 toward Raton, then head east about 40 miles on the road to Texas - you get within 3 miles of Capulin Volcano. You can take a quick detour and Capulin to get there and drive up to the top of the crater rim! Once you get to the visitor center, it's a few mile road at 20 mph up to the top!



Capulin Volcano MN12

I've been by the place half a dozen times but never stopped by. There's a small parking lot at the top with a great view – not crowded – so ran the county from there. In prime vacation season it might be crowded at the top. Short walk up to the overlook.

Whew! My grand tour of NM was done. There are another five or six in western NM but there wasn't enough time. Would have taken another 4-5 days to hit them. Another day and another trip. This was enough. My fun budget was expiring and the weather had been near perfect – couldn't ask for better. Well, there was some fog along the Rio Grande river in TX earlier.....warm and humid there – but no rain, snow, sleet, thunderstorms, or worse. Very good 'winter weather'.

I headed into Clayton NM – the last town before you hit Dalhart TX in another 50 miles. There's a Super 8 there – not cheap. There's not many there other than some older units and I didn't need to save a few bucks so I skipped them. Good rooms and clean at Super 8. They were working on the breakfast area. No problem - my room was way at the end of the second story. I seemed to remember there was a good place to eat downtown....so drove the few miles back to downtown – and sure enough - the bells went off. A few years ago, I ate at the Hotel Eklund – and did again this time. Superb Mediterranean Lasagna (veggie) with a full plate of steamed veggies too. Delicious! Scrumptious! That hotel go back to the turn of the century. If you want to stay there it's about \$81/night. The dining room has excellent food. Otherwise, your choice for dinner in this town is fast food, Pizza Inn, Sonic or Mexican.

Slept well.

Saturday 2/20/16

Up at 6 waiting for their breakfast at 6:30. No one around. No food out. Sign said breakfast 6:30 to 8:30. Others waiting ticked off. No one at the counter. Rang the night bell..no one showed up. I didn't have time to waste – it was going to be a long drive and long day to get home from here. Left mad as heck, drove to the Love's store and bought an egg biscuit, juice and decaf coffee. I'll never stay at this Super 8 again and it's going to get a big ding on Trip Advisor. Heh heh. Maybe there was a family emergency? Who knows but lots of folks a bit perturbed.

I figure breakfast is worth about 10 bucks if you have to eat out at a restaurant. No waffle this morning. I was on the road at 6:40 AM in Union County NM headed back the home state of TX 40 miles away. There were no 'new' national park units to run. Now to get home and take care of other things.

Now was the time to zip on home. I'd been away for a week – and I was out of fresh clothes, didn't feel like doing laundry, and the credit card was well used on the trip. Time to get to the desktop computer and upload 2000 QSOs or so to LoTW so people get 'confirmed' contacts with the park. From Clayton NM to home was 9 hours at full speed ahead. Mostly 65 mph in NM, and 70-75 mph roads in TX. A dozen or two towns to slow down for a mile or two then back up to speed.

However, if you know N4CD, other than running counties, with a short detour I could hit Lake Meredith Recreation Area (RC14) again – and stop for a short time and give it out again. Each time you 'activate' a park unit, you get a point for that activation on the ARRL leader board. I'd run this one before – but you can repeat parks as many times as you want – as long as you are 'out of the park' for 24 hours between runs. Just a short detour off the route – did that – ran CW only – and continued home.

This was the ARRL DX contest weekend. The 20M CW frequency was busy. First VP5KE was sitting on the cw net frequency and working a hundred stations an hour. No hope there. I wound up running on 17M CW and 30M cw. For at least 8 counties I went to 14.324, hollered for at least 2 minutes, and never 'got heard' or was able to run. Then I just gave up on SSB. Out this way, there is someone on 14.325 99% of the time. It's not working out well.

Got back home before 5pm. Unloaded the car....and decided to pig out at the Golden Corral Premium weekend. No food in the house. Now to do 2000 QSO of logs typing

them in to LoTW one at a time. Whew. Then to figure out the Double Diamond counties. Hope I hit something you needed. It was a sort of unplanned connect the dots for the parks trip – subject to instant weather and road condition changes. Zipped around Texas from the gulf coast to the Mexican border for 500 miles or so, up in NM, then back over to El Paso – then north through NM and out the northeast corner - then down from the panhandle to home. 2940 miles in 8 days. The new car – about a month old, now has over 4000 miles on it.

The radio seemed to work well. Much of the time the car battery voltage sat at 12.6 to 12.7v. The new 'fix' of heavy wire seems to have fixed the cw 'chirp' reports – either that or no one is telling me about the chirp.. hi hi .

Now to plan some other trips to hit the NPOTA units. I'm having fun!

Checked my ARRL Logbook of the World account. Since my first trip in January, I've uploaded 5426 QSOs to the server! Whew. That doesn't include county hunter contacts made in between the runs at the parks – likely another thousand or more. Over 4000 miles on the car and it's five weeks old. Are we having fun yet?

Awards Issued

It's now official



N4CD – Ran All USA Counties **Second Time**
September 12, 2014

No other awards were posted in Feb so far to pub date. Bob KC6AWX has wrapped up most of the work from his recently deceased father's estate and now is ready to process those LC's and other things that likely got a bit backlogged. He thanks you for the patience.

Events for County Hunters

We are back in QSO Party season once again! And a few DX contests to avoid plus a WPX contest for counties.

Mar 5 0000z to 6 Mar 2359z

1.8-28

ARRL International DX Contest, SSB

W/VE: RS, SP. Non-W/VE: RS, power
www.arrl.org/arrl-dx

12 Mar 1400z to 13 Mar 2000z
3.5-50

Oklahoma QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

RS(T), county or SPC

k5cm.com/okqp2016rules.pdf

12 Mar 1900z to 13 Mar 1900z
1.8-28

Idaho QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

RS(T), county or SPC

idahoncj.info/qsoparty/rules.htm

13 Mar 1800z to March 14 0100z

Wisconsin QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

County or SPC

www.warac.org/wqp/wqp.htm

19 Mar 1400z to 20 Mar 0200z
1.8-144

Louisiana QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

RS(T), parish or SPC

laqp.louisianacontestclub.org

19 Mar 1400z to 20 Mar 2359z
All

Virginia QSO Party

CW Ph Dig

Serial, county or SPC

www.qsl.net/sterling/VA_QSO_Party

26 Mar 0000z to 27 Mar 2359z

1.8-28

CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB

RS, serial

www.cqwpw.com/rules.htm

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April 21-23, 2016 Michigan Mini

Once again, the MI Mini will be held at the Holiday Inn in Traverse City, MI. Ed, K8ZZ, has moved to Topeka, KS, but will handle the email/reservations and Joe, W8TVT, will handle the hotel arrangements and other details. More to follow shortly. Check MARAC page.

May 14 -15th

2016 (50th) MARAC USA QSO PARTY

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

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

May 20-22 2016 – Dayton Hamvention

The annual Dayton Hamvention will (most likely) be held at Hara Arena on Friday, Saturday and Sunday May 20-22. There are some financial issues with the arena that need to be resolved (potential shut down) but so far things are on track for yet another great Hamvention. Put it on your calendar.

The County Hunter Forum, led by Tim, W8JJ, is scheduled and confirmed for Friday at 4pm.

August 1-4 2016 – Annual Convention

from W4SIG, Kerry:

The dates and host hotel have been set for the 2016 MARAC National in Memphis, TN. I am so looking forward to this event!! Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. It ought to be a lot of fun for all.

Right now I am working on the events and excursions and will have more details on that soon. There is so much to do in Memphis the challenge will be how to narrow it down. In addition to being centrally located, Memphis is has a deep and rich history in the Mississippi Delta being the “Home of the Blues” and the “Birthplace of Rock ‘n Roll”. You can bet there will be some Graceland and Elvis on the agenda, but there’s also Sun Studios, Beale Street, Gibson guitar factory, the Peabody Hotel with its duck pond in the lobby, and some of the best Barbecue and soul food your lips will ever taste!

Don’t plan on sticking to your diet. Oh, and get ready to enjoy the annual banquet while floating down the Mississippi River on a dinner cruise with live music! While more details will be coming, you can go ahead and make your hotel reservations now. The host hotel is very nice and a Hyatt property for only \$109 per night! You must make your own reservations by calling the Hyatt Place at 901-759-1174 and ask for the MARAC group rate.

This hotel has free warm breakfast and complimentary shuttle service to shopping and restaurants within a 5 mile radius, which includes two of the nicest shopping and restaurant-stocked locales in the area. We will have a large hospitality room in which to mingle throughout the days of the convention.

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That's all folks. See you next month

73 de N4CD