

County Hunter News

May 1, 2005
Volume 1, Issue 5

Welcome to Issue 5 of the County Hunter News, a monthly on-line publication for all county hunters, with an orientation toward CW operation. Thanks to Dennis, KK7X, who has provided us web space to bring you each edition of the CHN. Please visit his site, www.countyhunter.com and explore the many pages and pictures located there.

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

Notes from the Editor

Dang, seems a gremlin or two manages to appear in each issue....sometimes too much editing, or rewriting.....and a typo or two creeps in. Somehow AE3Z's call got accidentally left out in the final version of current cw ops on the MARAC board. AE3Z is the Northeast Director who is quite active working and giving out CW counties! It was not intended to not include him in the current cw operators. Glad to have you on CW Don!

It's been an exciting month on CW. Several major 'county putting out' expeditions by NA7W, KC0JG, K8ZZ, NM2L, ND9M, N4CD/W0RRY, plus mobiles going to the mini in Michigan gave us lots of counties to chase. At times, the DX was rolling in on 20M, often with runs working DL5AWI, DL5MC, OM3WW, OH3JF, G4KHG and VK4AAR(20 and 30M!), PA3ARM, DL3GA, DL4RX, OK2EC, OK1KT, OK1APV, LY2ZZ, G4KHB, SM5DHU, DL8MLD and others! Sometimes, there was more DX than stateside stations on 20M. On 30M in the evenings, there were some 15 and 20 minute runs, with DX calling in too from G, DL, VK, LU, HK.

This month we heard some new calls and relatively new calls on CW. Welcome Joyce, N9STL, now actively chasing counties on 30/40M, N6PDB heard on 20M CW, KL7D heard on both 20 and 30M, W4GNS on both 20 and 30M. Joining in the cw fun also KB6UF, KA0SHC, and others.

Breaking News - Feedback

The article was dated April 1, with an effective date of April 1, and most folks “got it” part way through. (along with the “Federal Commission on Communications”, with mailing in Washington DC???, and the “MARC” award chairperson’s new name and the “22” in the XXX-call!) The issue went to press a bit early, so maybe folks weren’t prepared to ‘be aware’ of practical jokes? However, some interesting comments came my way.

G4KHG: “Yes, Bob ! That was a great spoof about the X in the call ! We also have April 1st celebrated over here-at least up to midday.”

WG6X: “Overall a fine April fool gotcha!”

Anon-1: “If it gets screwed up I may just forego completing Bingo II . What is next on the hit list? “

Anon-2: “Giving all USACA award holders that have previously earned a USACA number a BINGO AWARD because "likely they have already exchanged reports with a station that had an X in the call " **is the most ridiculous suggestion that I have ever heard.**” (ED: But you believed it???? - At least for a while? –<grin>)

AA8HH: “He got ya! ... Hook, Line and Stinker”

KK7X: “I got it right away half way through the article! It is amazing how worked up we can get without having all of the facts. **Someday someone on the forum is going to sustain serious injury jumping to conclusions.**”

In a similar story, CQ Magazine also reported on FCC action –see the April, 2005 issue, p44, for complete details on “The Cure for Spectrum Rage”. Here’s a snippet:

“ Many have long suspected that there are a few among us – perhaps more than a few – who, for whatever reasons, seem unable to restrain themselves from deliberately interfering with on-the-air activities of their fellow hams. Now, in this exclusive article

for CW, Professor Heisseluft reports that the FCC is in the process of writing rules that will require applicants for new amateur licenses, as well as current licensees seeking to renew their licenses, to undergo psychological exams. New applicants who fail the test will have to wait a year before re-applying. Operators already licensed but who fail the exam will be required to surrender their license for a year, then retake the psychological test plus all elements of the grade level before being allowed to return to the air. Given the urgency of the matter, the new rules will take effect without the usual issuance of Notice of Proposed Rule Making! (NPRM) ”

ED: no doubt they took effect on April 1st as well, and the other publications haven't picked the story up yet!

Origins of the 3M Mini

Bill, KM4W sent this along

Along with my brother, (KA4SAX) and our wives, we attended our first National Convention. The National in Des Moines, Iowa, in July of 1981. We were on a vacation tour through the southwest and western states. We wound up in Des Moines, IA at the national convention. We attended some of the events and met the attendees, but had to leave before the Saturday night Banquet. I still remember Ken, W7LQT dressed up in his tiger suit. We also missed the photo session on Saturday afternoon. We had to head back home, my brother had to return to work on Monday morning.

Soon after returning home, I got this call from someone that I didn't know or even heard of. It was Gene Tyree, (N4ANV). . He told me that he had just been elected to the position of S.E. Director and that there had not been a Mini Convention in this area for several years. He asked me if I would help him set up a convention in Chattanooga, TN which is the central point of the Southeast District..

At that time I was still working and it seemed impossible for me to travel back and forth to Chattanooga. Gene then asked me if there were any Motels in my area(Manchester, TN). Well, at that time there were about as many Motels as there were gas stations. I think they both were up in the teens for a town of about eight thousand people. He told me that all they were looking for was a place to sleep and eat and a place to get together for meetings.

I contacted the local Holiday Inn and they were glad to take care of us. The hospitality area was a two-room suite with all the bedroom furniture moved out. The dates for the first S.E. Mini were the first weekend in November and there were 51 people showed up. There were more people from the 9 call area than any other area. The attendance continued to rise each year and in November of 1989 we had 221 people in the small hospitality area of a two-room suite. The motel had to go out and borrow silverware to set up the tables, we had to go single file down the tables to get to our seats, and if you wanted out before you got through eating and business attended to, you were out of luck.

That was the year that my daughter, who lived in Murfreesboro, called me and said she had a friend who worked at the Holidome in Murfreesboro and wanted us to come down and look over the situation. Gene Tyree and I went down and looked it over and they gave us the room rates and buffet cost and threw in free use of the three room hospitality area and we hooked up with them in November of 1990. In 1990 there were 234 attendees and 1991 there were 234.

For the next 14 years it varied from 212 to 145. I have in my possession over 450 used envelopes, one for each registration that I kept up with ticket info on the prizes. Over the years we had attendees from Canada, Hawaii, Germany, Belgium, England and all of the fifty states. I have really enjoyed being the host for this great event and I will never forget all the friends I made over that time. Thanks again to Gene Tyree for asking me to be a part of this great get together and many thanks to all of you good people who helped me after the convention started, I certainly couldn't have done it without you.

One other piece of info: The first year we moved to Murfreesboro, someone, I wish I knew who, made the remark that this was the "Manchester Mini at Murfreesboro", thus the 3M. Thank you all again for a wonderful time. “

De Bill KM4W

Master Platinum Award

Everyone (!) can be working toward their Master Platinum Award. If you work a mobile that has Master's Gold (11 have been awarded to date, 2 of them now silent keys), after the date they got their Master Gold Award, and after 2/2/03, those contacts count toward your Master Platinum Award!

Kwiklog Classic will track your progress if you 'turn on' the 'track Master Platinum' feature. Hopefully the new MARAC logging program when available will track it with less hassle. Be sure your data file is up to date on who has the Master Gold Award.

The current list of mobiles out there heard the in the past few months with Master Platinum include KI0JD, K5GE, W3CR, ND3T, N4CD, N7BKW, KC3X and N8STF.

W3CR runs many counties on 40M SSB, and folks have been following N4CD around through over 500 Master Platinum counties in the past 8 months mostly on cw and 40M SSB, and occasionally on 20 SSB when conditions are right.

So while you may not need a mobile for USACA, or Bingo, or Prefix, or Five Star award, you likely do need just about every mobile with Master Platinum in nearly every county.

The race is on to see who will be the first to finish up Master Platinum, which is intended to be a real challenge. Like the Master's Gold award, it also has additional parts, one that you have your Master Gold before you apply for the award (but all counties you work before that count), and also that you transmit from at least 500 counties and work a holder of Master's Gold from that county.

However, before you contemplate finishing your USACA, Bingo, or Master's Gold, you can be working on your Master Platinum award right now! Maybe 5 years from now, when you discover you are really 'addicted to county hunting' and you keep looking for challenges, you may kick yourself for not working the few MG mobiles running around out there now!

Many county hunters starting out often think they will get USACA and then stop. However, after they get USACA, they are thoroughly addicted to county hunting, and then decide that they want to get Bingo and other awards. Often folks just start out entering data into a 'coloring book' or CQ record book, or other simple logging program that just tracks the first contact in a county. In the quest for USACA, often they check on a county, and discover they don't need another contact since it is already confirmed.

Later, when they ARE ADDICTED, and they try to figure out how far along they are on the Bingo and other awards, they then kick themselves for not working mobiles that would have given them a contact good for Bingo, or a team, or a Big Rig in the county. Keeping track of Bingo is a little tough without a computer program, but dozens and dozens have done it. All it takes is a little work to understand the Bingo rules. If you pass up some of the tougher counties like Nantucket, or Dukes, or San Juan, WA when someone good for Bingo is there, it might be a long wait for the next one!

In the 'old days' before 1998 or so, the SSB Net Control would announce "We are going to run WORRY, good for 4 stars, in Tulsa, OK". Or "We are going to run KC1NA, good for 4 stars and the Big Rig award, in Somerset, Maine". Now, the current net control seems to not worry about those not using a computer program such as Kwiklog Classic that automatically will tell you if you need the Bingo, stars for 5 star, Big Rig, prefix, or other award in that county. Or "We are going to run N2OCW in Williams, OH, good for Bingo there with the "W" in his call".

If you have the program, you can quickly check. Many newcomers still start by using paper log or simple logging program that doesn't have all that info handy. Kwiklog Lite will not track anything but the USACA award – you need the full version to track all the awards.

So you are on your own to check it out. The MARAC database, or the K3IMC awards area will tell you who has a star (i.e., earned their USACA already). The B&B Shop put out a program called PEACH that had a database in it as well. After a while, you learn who the big rigs are, and who has stars (good for Bingo anywhere). You can track Bingo in a separate record book, or program, or just log them until you decide to buy a computer program that tracks them all. Of course, with a computer program, you need to keep it up to date with the latest additions of USACA holders and other awards (Bingo, nth time, Master's Gold).

Who knows? After someone gets the first Master Platinum Award, MARAC will likely dream up an even 'tougher' to get challenge for the totally addicted county hunters.

De N4CD

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dayton Hamvention May, 20,21,22 2005

Wow! The Biggest Hamfest of the year is coming up this month – Friday May 20 to Sunday May 22, 2005. If you buy tickets on line at www.Hamvention.org, you get a \$5 discount. For motel accommodations, contact the Visitors Bureau at 800-221-8235. Latest information is at www.hamvention.org

This year is also the ARRL EXPO 2005 National Convention, so there will be even more going on. Grab some ham buddies, carpool and share motel rooms to save on the expenses, and head to Dayton for the Hamfest!

The County Hunter Forum will be held on Friday at 2:15 PM this year (earlier than normal). After the forum at about 5:30-6, the county hunters will QSY to Ryan's Steak House (buffet style) for dinner. Check your schedule when you get there since the forum time seems to keep shifting in time!

This year, Lori, K8XTQ and Fred, KE8TQ, will give presentations on the YL perspective, and 'living with a county hunter'. We have lots to talk about with the waning sunspots, the re-emergence of 40m SSB net, and the start of county hunting on 30M.

Lots of county hunters will be around and out in the flea market. Look for Lori, K8XTQ at the Dayton Hamvention desk. Steve, AA8HH will have flea market spaces #2952 and 2953, and K8MFO at spaces 1937 and 1938

Operating Events

Another good month is here with lots of events for county hunters, especially CW county hunters. Some of these should have lots of activity.

First, we have both the MARAC CW contest, and the MARAC SSB contest. The rules for the CW contest follow after this section.

MARAC CW Contest, May 7-8 see below

Indiana QSO Party – CW/SSB, May 7 1600Z to May 8 0400Z. Up 40 KHz on CW, and 3.850, 7.230, 14.250. More info at www.hdxcc.org/inqp this has been excellent for the past several years.

New England QSO Party – CW/Phone May 7 200Z to May 8, 0500Z, and May 8 1 300Z to 2400Z. CW freqs recommended are 3.540, 7.035, 14.040, 21.050, 28.050, and SSB look on 3.880, 7.280, 14.280, 21.380, 21.380. More info at www.neqp.org This has always been a good QSO party to snag Nantucket and Dukes, MA. Usually lots of activity!

Oregon QSO Party – CW/SSB May 7 1400Z to 0200 on May 8. Up 40 KHz on CW, and SSB on 3.885, 7.255, 14.255, 21.355. More info at www.codxc.com

Nevada QSO party – CW/SSB/RTTY May 7 0000Z to May 8 0600Z. Freq – up 15 from the lower edge of General band for CW, and up 25 from lower edge of General band for SSB. More info at www.a51cc.com/announce.htm

Mid Atlantic QSO Party – May 14 1600Z to May 15 0400Z, and May 15 1100-2400Z. Up 50 KHz from bottom edge of band segment. More info at www.qsl.net/maqso

MARAC USACA Counties QSO Party SSB. May 21 0000Z to 2400Z. Freq: 3.880, 7.240, 14.275, 21.340. More info at www.stpaulisland.net//countycontest

CQ WW WPX Contest – CW (good weekend to not go mobile!). May 28 0000Z to May 29, 2400Z (48 hours of madness). Lots of USA stations that will work you, and the weirder prefix you have, the better. See rules at www.cqwpw.com

Awards Issued

N5KGY 2nd Time #350 4/18/2005
WD9HAW Fourth Time #120 4/15/2005
NF0N 2nd Time \$349 4/10/2005
W5AL Bingo #265 4/08/2005
K6OHM Third Time # 3/3/2005
N0ZA Bingo II, #34, 4/3/2005
AB3LS, Third Time, #186, 4/2/2005
WB9UKS 2nd Time #351 April 21, 2005
K8WQY USACA #1119 4/21/2005

ARRL Propagation Predictions

The following came from the ARRL propagation bulletin received April 1, 2005. No, it is not an April fools joke! We are headed 'downhill' in the solar cycle for another few years, darn it!

“SB PROP ARL ARLP013
ARLP013 Propagation de K7RA

.....

We see clearly that cycle 23 continues the fall toward solar minimum, which is currently forecast roughly around October 2006 to April 2007. Fortunately, the rise of a solar cycle is much more rapid than its decline. But when comparing current smoothed sunspot numbers to the predicted numbers once the next cycle turns up, the predicted value for April 2005 is just slightly above the predicted value for December 2007.

So we shouldn't expect conditions to improve beyond what we've had recently until early 2008, or a little less than three years from now. Current sunspot numbers are lower than they've been since 1997. The peak of the next cycle will probably occur in 2010.”

Time to Vote - Soon

Well, the CHN news jumped the gun on this one. Nominations for office close at the end of April to give folks a chance to volunteer for office. After that, the election committee has to pass the slate of candidates to the board, and then the ballot will appear in the next RoadRunner and On-Line. So the ballot is coming, but not here yet to vote.

Members can vote every three months for the 'CW Mobile' and "SSB Mobile" of the quarter, plus CW Net Control and SSB net control, along with team. The results of this are used by MARAC at the end of the year to decide who gets which awards.

On the Road with N4CD - W7/G4KHG

This month, we hear from Eddie, G4KHG. It's a bit tough to work the counties from "over there" in the UK. Many have worked him over the years, running mobile in the USA. He got introduced to county hunting in 1982, via a friend, G4HBI. Over the years, he has put out several hundred counties, running 162 in 1994 alone! In that time, he's given out over 100 last counties! You may have caught up with him at a convention, although he is usually out west during the summers enjoying the high mountain territory.

One of his adventures and solutions: ". Most recently locked all the car keys in the car while engine running in FL !!!!! Barbara said it was my fault but I blame the car !!! Problem now solved forever thanks to two dog leads from Wal-Mart-----from now on if I ever try to get out of the car with keys still in ignition, my shorts fall down !!!!!"

"Can hardly wait for the next USA vacation !" -that is an almost constant thought with me. Let me say right now, (just in case you have failed to notice over the years) that Barbara and I both love visiting your great country. Each year we buy the National Parks Pass, an excellent and very worthwhile bargain at \$50. (Free for you US citizens, if aged over 62!) Between visits, I spend the time planning the next visit----of course!

The big bonus for me is bringing along my mobile station and putting out the USA counties. However, these are holiday trips so the time has to be shared out between sight-seeing, hiking and running counties. We average about 280-300 miles a day and cover around 7,500 miles during our summer five-week visit. (We do have rest days despite Barbara's denial!)

At present my mobile station consists of the Icom IC-706MKIIG and hamsticks. I run only 50w using a suitably fused power cord to the vehicle accessory socket. I used to do a full hook-up directly to the battery and run 100w but decided that was unnecessary hassle for a temporary setup. I mount the hamsticks on a trunk-lip mount (all bought from Lakeview, SC). For cw I use a Bencher twin paddle. I removed the heavy metal base (after all, I have to carry all this stuff in my carry-on bag, starting 5000 miles away even from your East coast !) and I replaced it with some light UPVC which I temporarily stick to the flat top of the dashboard with Blutack. My navigator steadfastly refuses to log for me even after (or because of) 43 years of marriage and 25 years of amateur radio ! So, I use a tape recorder and transpose to my laptop in the motel at night.

As of March, 2005 we (well, I, actually, as Barbara will only drive on the correct side of

the road !) have driven 87,194 miles over there. Do I need to say that county hunting is great ?Putting out counties, however, is a greater thrill. I am also delighted to have been able to give out over 100 last counties so far while operating /M -not bad for a G4 station from England.

We are both very grateful for all your company along the way. We love the wide open spaces but it is always reassuring to hear you guys coming through on our radio. (Hi, Gene, N4ANV!) How brilliant it was to work /m to /m Clarence KH7B in Kauai, Bob N4CD in Alaska and Father Terry K6HZI (now sadly SK) up in the Yukon.

Finally, the first page of the printed routes we compile for each vacation always contains the following words which forever bring a lump to my throat..

"From Salt Lake City, Utah, we are setting out on a journey of over 7,500m miles through some of the loveliest scenery in North America, along mighty rivers, through rugged canyons and wooded valleys, over snow-capped mountains and across awesome desert-land. Let's enjoy it and be thankful ! Uhhh ! Here we go again !!"

de G4KHG







Planned trip for KA3DRO

We expect to depart here on an extended RV trip with some time taken to run many counties new to me. I will outline the days and counties planned, but be aware that conditions, health, and mechanical situations make create the need to alter the plan. We are making many stops where I am not planning to run counties but will probably be on the radio from the campsite in the evenings. See K3IMC planned trips page.

MARAC CW CONTEST RULES – May 7/8

2005 (39TH) MARAC COUNTY HUNTERS CW CONTEST
0000Z Saturday May 7 to 2400Z Sunday May 8, 2005

The Mobile Amateur Radio Awards Club is pleased to sponsor the 38th Annual County Hunters CW Contest. Mobile and Fixed operation from every county in the U.S. is encouraged.

RULES: Fixed Stations may be worked only once on each band. U.S. Mobiles (identified by signing /M) may be worked each time they change county or band. A Fixed Station working a Mobile on a county line may count the Mobile as only ONE QSO (15pts) and may count each county (two maximum) as a separate multiplier. Only stations with one operator (one transmitter at a time) are eligible for awards.

Note: PORTABLE CATEGORY has been eliminated due to lack of participation.

Clarifications:

- Please use the state/county abbreviation list available at URL: <http://www.bnk.com/W0QE/CountyAbbrev-V3-4col.pdf> (or .doc).
- Contest contacts between operators in the same vehicle or in shadowing vehicles are invalid. Does not apply to casual contacts between passing mobiles.
- There are no restrictions against spotting mobiles.
- To be considered as "Mobile" you must put out a least 2 counties.

EXCHANGE: Signal report, state and county-abbrev for U. S. stations. Signal report, "DX" for all other stations (including Canada & Mexico).

SCORING: For a valid contact, one station must be in a U.S. County. One point for fixed stations; 15 points for U.S. Mobiles; 5 points for DX. Controlled Net contacts are invalid for contest purposes. FINAL SCORE = TOTAL QSO POINTS times TOTAL NUMBER OF U.S. COUNTIES WORKED.

Mobiles changing states during the contest should calculate their scores for each state and a total score. Total Overall Score must not count a county as a multiplier more than once regardless of the mobile's county or band.

FREQUENCIES: CW: 3.575, 7.050, 14.050, 21.050, 28.050. Fixed Stations should operate above the suggested frequencies; mobiles, below. No WARC bands.

AWARDS: MARAC Contest Certificates:

First Place Fixed in each State, Canadian Province, and Country.
First Place Mobile in each State.

MARAC Contest Plaques:

1st and 2nd place U.S. Mobile, 1st and 2nd place U.S. Fixed station, 1st place Canadian Station if enough entries warrant an award, and 1st place DX station. For contest Award purposes, DX is any country other than the U.S. and Canada.

Send completed logs and summary sheet by June 10, 2005, to:

1st choice: AA8R@AOL.COM
2nd choice: Randy Hatt AA8R; 7878 W. County Line
Rd. Howard City, Mich. 49239
(Text, WORD .DOC, Cabrillo, EXCEL files OK).

Contest package available on request (no SASE required).
More info available at website <http://www.countyhunter.com>

On the Road with N4CD – Part I

Finally, the ‘spring bug’ bit, the weather was sunny, and it looked like it was finally going to be a rain-free weekend. K8MFO had sent me a map from a coloring book, with all the counties he needed still blank. There were about 25 in Texas, with many of them in clusters, and some here and there. You’ll recall Texas is a big state, and you can drive all day long, and still be in Texas, so I couldn’t get to all of them in one trip. I decided to go ‘out west’ to get many he had in a cluster out there. That would be 16 for him, and about 25 on the trip total.

I took the 20/30/40m cw antenna system, plus an extra Hamstick for 40m SSB, although from that far west in TX, it is tough to work much on 40m, either mode. I took the trusty IC706, a logbook, the camera, the maps, and needs lists for TX and headed out. I didn’t have time to send out emails, but hopefully folks watch the K3IMC forum and planned trips page.

Spring time brings good weather, lots of sun, but can also bring severe thunderstorms, hail, and other nasty surprises. Last year, I got clobbered by hail out west, with tornadoes on the ground just 20 miles away. After the hail, the ‘hail fog’ was so dense you couldn’t see the front of the car, and I had to sit for about 30 minutes to get enough visibility to drive slowly off again down the road! Other times, you have a perfectly nice trip. Gas was about \$2.10/gal when I left.

I headed out on Saturday, taking an hour to get out of the “MetroPlex” of Dallas Fort Worth and the six lane interstates, finally reaching ‘open spaces’ of Parker County. I took a few short side trips to snag Stephens (10 mile detour) and Shackelford/Jones (20 mile detour), then headed southwest to Runnels, Coke, Sterling, Glasscock, Reagan, and Upton, which are sparse counties. Some counties have no motels, but they all have power lines that make lots of QRN and often make it hard to find a place to operate. There are not too many roads, so the power lines almost always go along the road. Sometimes 4 separate sets of towers/poles with lines on all of them, two on each side of the road! Not only do they generate QRN, they do a nice job of blocking signals.

Band conditions are certainly different now. On 20M cw, most of the contacts were with Europeans. OH3JF often ran the net, with DL5MC, DL6KVA, DL3GA, DL5AWI, SM6TEU, SM6VR, OK1KT, OK1AFC, G4KHB, DL8MLD showing up for most of the

runs. On 30M, Eddie, G4KHG was in there in the afternoons working mobiles on 10.114 MHz. I made good time, and ran an extra 2 counties the first day, stopping in Big Spring TX in Howard County, TX. In this part of TX, you often are wise to plan to stay near the interstate since motels are often scarce elsewhere.

I stopped first at the Super8, and they wanted \$61, plus tax. Hmmm! Too much. Next door the Motel 6 was \$33 including tax, but no breakfast. I could manage a lot of breakfast for \$30! Just 500 feet away is the Rip Griffin Truck stop with decent dinner and breakfast buffets, and I ate both meals there (\$8.50 and \$5.50). This was 'daylight savings time change' weekend, so I lost an hour of sleep, and was on the road early in the morning to catch the sunrise. Not much activity, but by the time I got to the next county, the band was open on 30M. I headed up to Scurry and Borden, then over to Dawson and Gaines, up to Yoakum/Cochran, and then east again. Its tough here to find roads without very loud QRN (not many roads, lots of power lines carrying power to elsewhere).

It was a busy weekend on cw, with ND9M finishing up in AL while headed home, NA7W out in MT, NF0N in NE, W9MSE headed back from NC to WI, and WG6X in GA, and KQ0B in IL. There were mobiles QSY up 2 KHz, down 2 KHz. Occasionally, two mobiles would not hear each other, and momentarily two would try to run at the same time till things got sorted out. 30M seemed to have the most activity.

Most county lines around the oil fields are places with S3 QRN on cw, a lot worse on SSB. Digging out the weak EU signals is tough. Amazingly, I worked most of them without relays, but often at 339 both ways.

It is 'wildflower' season in TX, with hundreds of miles of road with wonderful colored flowers. I saw one turkey, and maybe 100 'roadrunners' – small birds that zip across the road pretty quickly. Just like the one on the MARAC patch.

All the oil wells (pump jacks) need power, and there are thousands of them out there. Most are just now stripper wells, producing 5-15 barrels a day, a mere fraction of what they used to produce. There aren't many people, and no one worries about 'noisy power-lines'. I then headed east toward home.

As Sunday wore on, I was getting tired, and folks tend to fade away. I stopped at an often visited motel in Aspermont (Stonewall county) - \$30 including tax. It was the beginning on hunting season, so the place was nearly full. Next door is a nice restaurant, so that is convenient, open till 9:30PM, open at 5 am. Gas was \$2.25 (ouch) and the car was thirsty. I was on the road early headed east. I had extra time, so I needed to take some detours and get more counties.

Joyce, N9STL starting working me on 30M. I ran Baylor, and decided I could take an extra hour and go get Foard, TX for her, the last county (LC) in TX. I ran up highway 1919, a small road through the middle of nowhere at near 80 mph (the speed limit is 70). Joyce was waiting as I got there and ran Foard on 30M cw. You really have to want to go to Foard because there is no reason to go there otherwise. I sat at the CL, ran it all

bands, then backtracked through Baylor to Archer, then back on the original route. During the week, I really want to be home before rush hour, since things get real messy with big slow traffic jams getting back through the Dallas MetroPlex..

Now, the MRCs will flood in. I took the roll of film to Wal-Mart to get it developed, with double prints, so I can send a few pics out so folks can see what Texas county lines look like. Some are great – no power lines within miles – others are disasters with power lines crossing, and near impossible QRN levels, especially on SSB with the wider bandwidth.

Now I'm planning the next trip – so you'll likely work me in a few more counties!

De N4CD

A Mountain Top Emergency/Lessons Learned By Bud Johnson WI5G

(From the Richardson Wireless Klub Newsletter, The Chawed Rag, April 2005, with permission)

On Tuesday, January 28, 1998, I left Knoxville, TN, area going over the Great Smoky Mountains toward Savannah, GA. I was traveling alone in my motor home and was to meet my wife in Orlando, FL, in a few days. On Monday night, the 27th, before I went to bed I carefully checked the weather forecast on the satellite system (weather channel) and we were supposed to have some light rain the next day. No problem, during the night I heard the rain start to fall on the motor home roof – I turned over and went back to sleep.

The next morning I got everything ready and started the trek over the mountains on Interstate 40 towards Asheville, NC. About 60 miles into the trip, the rain began to turn into light snow. Soon it turned into lots of snow. Soon it turned into snowflakes larger than I could imagine, and falling faster than I had ever seen before in Texas. By about 9 am, the traffic on I-40 was going slower and slower, and I realized we had not moved but 20 miles in the last hour. By 10 am, the traffic came to a halt and it continued to snow. I along with 600 other cars, trucks, and buses was stuck on I-40 just past the tunnel where I-40 goes through the mountain northwest of Asheville. The headlines in the Dallas Morning News (Jan 29, 1998) stated, 'Up to 4 feet of left thousands of people without power and stranded'. I-40 was clogged with snow, ice and stranded traffic, and states of emergency were declared in NC, VA, and WV.

I try to keep my motor home in excellent repair and feel I am prepared for almost any emergency. I have satellite TV, GPS, HF radio, VHF, UHF and cell phone. The motor home has all kinds of tools aboard, spare parts, first aid equipment, three batteries and

other equipment. I can communicate with the greatest of ease with almost anyone and have scanner freqs for all the rest. The motor home carries about 60 gallons of gasoline, 25 lbs of LP, 80 gallons of water and I had stocked up with \$200 worth of provisions on Monday right before the trip. I even had two gallons of Blue Bell ice cream in the freezer.

As the snow began to pile deeper and deeper on the roads, no vehicles could move. Cars would try to push the snow or get out of line and off the side they would go. Everyone was keeping their motors running to stay warm. I called Paula on the cell phone and told her I might be late getting to Orlando, so I knew the cell phone was working fine. Several truckers and others used my cell phone until about noon the first day, and then suddenly it went dead. At the time I did not know that the backup generators for the cell towers were choked full of snow and soon failed to run. No cell phone, no problem, I began trying to reach the UHF/VHF repeaters, but soon could not raise any repeater. No problem, I got on HF and in the next 38 hours spoke to many people all over the US. Most of these people were not of much help, since they were 800-900 miles away, but at least we had communications. I listened on 11 meters, and I thought we would get out of this mess in a few hours. First mistake. By Tuesday evening cars began running out of gas and the occupants were getting very cold. I would pump gas out of the motor home into a 5-gallon can. Ladies began lining up at the door of the motor home to use the facilities and I was making coffee and sandwiches as fast as I could. During the night the side door of the motor home had a constant line of people waiting to get to the potty.

A little past midnight, I quit giving out gasoline as the motor home tank was just above one quarter, and the generator stops running at this level in order to give the motor home engine gas to go 100 miles or so. I had plenty of LP to keep warm and cook with so no problem. I really thought we would be out of this mess on Wednesday. Wed. night and we still had not moved, the generator on the motor home did quit at this time (out of gas). The GPS quit giving position information, the TV would not work without the generator. HMMMM – this was getting to be a problem. I got all the snow out from under the motor home and would rock it back and forth to keep the snow away from the radiator, but after Wed night the potty was full, we were out of water for coffee, and all the food was gone (including the two gallons of Blue Bell). People were still coming to the motor home for something to eat or drink. The National Guard had buried their HumVees and none of their radios were working. Their antennas sure looked good swinging back and forth, but without fuel their radios were of no use. The highway patrol was working as hard as they could trying to take care of people in wrecked cars and those hurt in the ditches. Most of those in the ditches were those who jumped out of the lanes. This was a real study in human nature. The truckers stayed right in the lanes and made the job of the snow plows much, much easier.

At approximately 6pm on the next day, Thursday, the snowplows got the last cars forcibly pushed out of the way. (Hey, most of them were dented anyway) and cleared the highway 42 miles in front. One motor home, 600 cars, trucks that could still run carefully drove out of the mountains and into safety.

There were four people who died from heart attacks or froze to death during this emergency.

Lessons I learned from this:

- 1) No matter how tempting it is to be a Good Samaritan, do not give away gasoline. Give away food or water, but do not give away gasoline.
- 2) Plan for the emergency to be longer than is estimated by the authorities.
- 3) Monitor very carefully the consumption of food and water. Without my noticing, one person ate or took a whole loaf of bread that could have made sandwiches for many people.
- 4) Very early in the emergency, I gave away a pair of gloves to a man with very cold hands, olde dumb Bud needed those gloves many times during the next 2 days.
- 5) Southern hospitality and kindness must, by the dictates of human nature, be set aside and one person must take charge of the supplies afforded by the Group. I should have been this person since most of the supplies were mine. I failed to do so until too late into the emergency.
- 6) Do not hope or wait for the government to lend a helping hand. The Government needs much more time to get organized.
- 7) Get a bigger motor home, one that holds more food, fuel, water, and a MUCH BIGGER POTTY!

De WI5G

On the Road with N4CD/W0RRY – Part II

I still had the urge to put out counties, so I called W0RRY, Charlie, in Tulsa. He was 'up' for a county hunting trip, so we decided to do a 'connect the dots' trip to MO and IA. He needed a large number there for 5th time, some for Masters Gold, and on CW. I needed a lot there on CW and on 30M. I could also use Master Platinum transmitted county contacts to reach the 500 number required.

I went up to Tulsa on Friday, and we headed out the next day (Saturday) up through MO. N4CD did the driving and operating on cw, W0RRY did the logging and helped with the navigation

We took a map from a coloring book for both states, and marked which counties were needed. Then we figured out a route to get just about all of them in IA, and most of them in MO, something we could do in a five day trip. We also checked for Last County needs, to see if we could add in a few that were desperately needed that weren't too far off the route. We marked up the highway maps for the planned route. We also marked the coloring book map with the route, and used it to double check that we did make contacts with each other in the counties we needed! (Once or twice before, we would up leaving the county and having to go back since we had been so busy working others that we forgot to work each other!).

This was an 'on the run' trip with minimal side trips requiring a stop to run counties. My ideal route, if I am running 10-20 minutes of contacts a county, are to plan a route that gets you into and out of a county after about 10-20 miles of road...if you can find roads that let you do that, and keep on course. That way you don't stop, you are headed toward the next one. Occasionally, you have to stop since you need to just go into a county then back out as there is no easy way to continue the route. That can take 20-30 minutes to run on 30m, 20m and 40M CW, then go to 40M SSB for the folks there.

The speed limit in IA is 55 just about everywhere, and the car liked that speed, getting 30 mpg. When gas is over \$2/gal, that helps.



N4CD



WORRY

The vast majority of contacts were on 30M – from 10 to 40 a county, depending on conditions, whether a weekend or not. In the evenings when folks were home, the band was often going strong till 8pm (0100Z) local time, sometimes later to mobiles out in MT and the far west!

That was the ‘plan’ as well as trying not to run counties I had already run before for 2nd time transmitted counties. This trip, we took along a little 30M QRP MFJ “Cub” transceiver, key, headphones, and an ‘antenna’ consisting of 50 ohm resistor. We had a 12 volt battery pack to provide power. In the counties we needed, at the county line, we could work real quickly for a contact. Before this trip, we had used a Mizuho 6M SSB/CW handheld for the contacts. (The ICOM IC706 has 6M on it – I turned power down to lowest and didn’t worry about SWR for those contacts). The 30M rig turned out to work FB. Other county hunters use 2M handhelds to make their contacts

Lots of back roads to get the ones we needed. Conditions on 20M were terrible, other than the DX coming in. Listening on 20M SSB, mobiles had 5 contacts maybe, sometimes less, and ran for 2 or 3 minutes most of the time. On CW, we were running for 10-15 minutes each county on 30m, with maybe another 5-10 DX contacts on 20M, and up to half a dozen on 40M CW. We had a separate 40M SSB antenna, and checked in frequently there. Some of the SSB folks would also work us on CW right after the run if the net was not busy with other mobiles waiting to run.

I usually got the Master Platinum contact with W3CR (who always seems to be on 7238 listening) and K5GE, who follows me around on 40SSB, or 40/30 CW. That is one of the awards I am working on, and **anyone** can be collecting Master Platinum counties by

working one of the handful of stations out mobile who already have earned the Master Gold award (ND3T, N4CD, N8STF, KC3X, K5GE, KI0JD, etc).

Lots of counties! We ran over 60 in IA, 25 in MO, a half dozen in KS, plus about half a dozen in OKLA on the trip of 2500+ miles. Not too many ‘adventures’ and mostly good weather, but at this time of year you check the weather channel every night for severe storm predictions, and keep a close eye on the weather while in ‘tornado alley’. Lots of wind, temps in the 60s for the most part. While we were out on our trips, one day in NE, they were having baseball size hail in several counties – which can sure ruin your day. Meanwhile, it was snowing in MT! Yuk! Extra care was needed when pulling over onto the shoulder as the ground was rain saturated, and one could easily sink deep into the muck. Or worse! After getting back home, the car needed a very thorough cleaning to get rid of 50 lbs of accumulated dirt in the wheel wells and undersides of the car. It’s real easy to get stuck and require a tow truck if you aren’t super careful.

Charlie had writer’s cramp at the end of the day from all the logging. Both of use ran on 40M SSB, and in a couple counties, we popped up on 20M SSB, and Charlie gave out a few SSB counties for the folks. He put his head down most nights at 9pm and was sound asleep 2 minutes later. We were both up at 6, getting set for hitting the road at 7am, just about sunrise time. 40M would be open for cw, and by 7:30 (1230Z) 30M would be open but ‘long’. On the way back, we had a chance to meet up with Larry, KA0SHC in his home county. Larry spends a lot of time helping out on 7238, and often will work the mobile on cw after the SSB run right on 7238 if the net isn’t busy with another mobile right away. Occasionally, he will come to the regular cw freqs as well. This is also how Joyce, N9STL started out, and now she is chasing counties on 30 and 40m on cw.

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KA0SHC

You would think that 5 days and 2500 miles and 50 pages of log (maybe 3000-3500 contacts) would be enough, but after a few days rest, we decided that we needed to clean up OK with a 'connect the dots' trip. This turned out to be an ambitious two-day trip. We left early in a big circle around the state. In Cherokee county, there was lots of construction, with one way traffic and 'pilot cars' causing at least an hour's delay getting through there, plus the roads are not great for making time (maybe 35mph average). The first day, we wound up 2 hours behind, pulled in the Altus, OK, at 8pm, only to be told 'Every motel within 30 miles is full tonight!'. Oops!! Not good planning.

We took a chance and checked the Best Western right down the block. Charlie went in just for the heck of it. The lady at the reception desk was on the phone. After she finished, he asked about a room. She said you're in luck – that was a cancellation on the phone, and we have just that room left for tonight. Whew!

Charlie tried to find out the cheapest rate. The lady gave the prices for AAA and AARP discount – ouch! A budget buster! Then she asked “Are you here on business?”. Charlie said no. Again she asked “Are you here on business”. After 3 times, Charlie realized, he was there on “county hunting business”. That rate turned out to be the lowest by \$10.

It was more expensive than my normal budgeting, but it was after 8pm, we had been on the road for 13 hours, and we were both very tired and not looking to drive another 30 or 50 miles, with the storms on the horizon. Normal choice is Super8 motels for our trips. In TX, I'll stay at small motels for \$30/night. We had a quick dinner buffet at the Ryans ½ mile away, filled up the near empty gas tank (\$35) and then to bed at 9pm after 13 hours of intensive county hunting and driving/logging.

Oh, a piece of “Super 8 trivia”. Some of Super 8s have full breakfast bars with cereal, fruit, juice, coffee, rolls, etc. Others just have the ‘bread and water’ type, donuts, juice, coffee, toast. The difference is number of rooms. The magic number is 30. If there are more than 30 rooms, you get the full breakfast. If there are 30 or less, you get the ‘bread and water’ breakfast! I had always wondered why some had it, others didn't.

Next day, we were on the road by 7am as usual, with lots of counties to run. Good weather, but very humid, windy, and storms going to happen somewhere where the south winds with high humidity hit the cold north winds. We kept going, arriving home for a late dinner. Gas was down to \$2/gal in OKLA.

Then N4CD headed back to Texas to take care of lots of logging and paperwork, and preparing for the onslaught of MRCs likely headed this way! I took two rolls of pics, so you might get one in your return envelope.

We had a lot of fun, and hope you got the counties you needed!

Some typical stats from the runs during the trip. Most counties we averaged about 30-35 contacts, fewer if we moved off freq on 30M usually. The 40M SSB net only ran part of the day due to the sharing, other nets on weekends in the mornings, so contact totals were fairly low compared to 30M, which proved to have the most contacts consistently. Conditions really got great in the evenings with huge runs with folks home from work during the week and the propagation very good until well after dark.

Date Time County 30M-cw/20M-cw/40M-cw/40M-SSB QSO

4/9/05 1343Z Craig, OK 14/0/9/2 (14 on 30cw, 0 on 40cw, 9 on 40cw, 2 on 40SSB)

4/9/05 1445Z Jasper, MO 25/1/7/0

4/9/05 1503 Lawrence, MO 25/3/10/0

4/9/05 1917 Morgan, MO 30/3/15/8

4/10/05 1438Z Linn, MO 21/8/10/0

4/10/05 Sullivan, MO 22/8/22/1

4/10/05 Wayne, IA 20/9/10/0

4/10/05 Louisa, IA 38/9/4/0

4/11/05 1342Z Muscatine, IA 23/5/3/0

4/11/05 1630 Fayette, IA 11/3/7/3

4/11/05 2327 Buena Vista, IA 27/2/11/0

4/13/05 1751 Bourbon, KS 21/6/4/17

4/19/05 1631 Woodward, OK 20/7/9/5

4/19/05 1859 Grant, OK 17/21/2/2

4/19/05 2122Z Logan, OK 9/9/4/7

After listening on 20M SSB, where the average run seems to last about 2-3 minutes, and one makes maybe 3-5 contacts from locations in the middle of the country, I'm sure glad I'm a CW county hunter, with 30M, where we were making 15-50 contacts a county! Depending on time of day, with limited use of 7238, maybe you make another 2-10 on 40M SSB, if there is a net there, you get spotted, and the Rotten Apples aren't there. It hardly pays to burn gas on a trip to make a handful of contacts per county.

Bob N4CD

County Hunter Mystery Pic - A challenge

A county hunter sent in the following picture. The challenge is to identify the county hunter, the county, and the location from the picture and the clues. The clues along with the picture shot through the windshield should provide you with all you need including the name of the county and the location.

- 1) I am a county hunter that usually roams from MN to TX
- 2) You can find me on 30M CW, using a straight key, and 20M SSB, although I spend less time there now than I did in the past.
- 3) Miss Ida's (N2TPH) first call was **KB2PDC**. (Big Hint: **P.D.C.**)
- 4) If you play an accordion in Texas, you will develop a strong left arm.
- 5) You may have met me at the 3M or on the trip to the Grand Ole Opry

Answer in next month's County Hunter News!



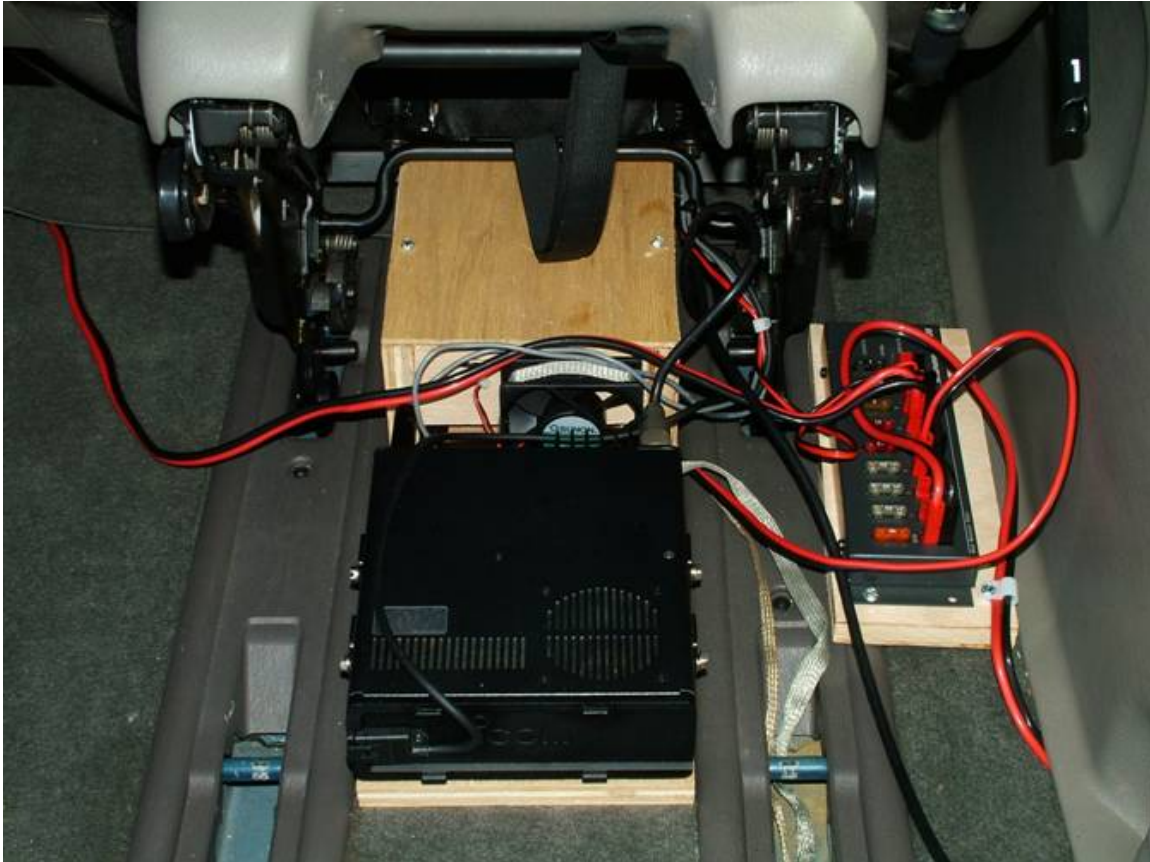
We received an email from Pete NN9K with pictures of his mobile installation

Bob,

Enclosed is some information for your consideration in the next issue of County Hunter News Online.

This is the radio installation in my Chrysler Town and Country van. All of my operating is CW and I have tailored the installation for that purpose.

The radio is an Icom-706MKIIG remotely mounted under the right-hand rear passenger seat. Wiring from the battery is run under the vehicle to a RIGrunner and then to the radio. As you can see the radio is mounted on a wooden board that contains input voltage noise filtering and provides a convenient mounting for a van. 706s run hot especially in a contesting environment and the fan provides enough air flow to keep the rig happy.



The wires leading off to the left in the picture feed a 2-meter radio used for APRS and is also mounted under one of the seats.

All of the wiring to the operating position runs under the carpeting. The paddles are a Vibroplex Code Warrior with the plastic handles replaced with metal ones.



Since the van has an electric tailgate and I wanted to be able to raise and lower it without removing the antenna mast so I designed a mounting bracket that bolts onto the license plate area of the vehicle. Two additional holes had to be drilled to ensure solid mounting and grounding. All of the coax to the antenna is run inside the tailgate so nothing is hanging free when the tailgate opens or closes.



All-in-all the installation works very nicely for my operating preferences. More photographs showing how the operating configuration is changed for mobile contesting and with the antennas mounted can be found on my web site at <http://nn9k.home.mchsi.com>.

Thanks Bob.

Pete, NN9K
<http://nn9k.home.mchsi.com>