

County Hunter News

January 1, 2014
Volume 10, Issue 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

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

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

http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at:

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

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

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

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

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

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

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

Notes from the Editor

1) N4CD Rumbings

The winter weather hit. When I got back from the trip to MD in early December, it was 70 degrees in Dallas. Nice weather. It was cold when I left. Missed that small spell of cold weather. It was really nice after Thanksgiving.

It wasn't officially winter yet by Dec 5th, but Mother Nature didn't care. 2-4 inches of rain/sleet/ice, very very cold arctic cold front moves in, sleet and freezing rain descended upon Tarrant, Denton, Dallas and Collin Counties in TX. To the west, I-20 and I-30 were shut down by ice in Parker and Palo Pinto. Trying to escape to the north wouldn't work either as the I-35 bridges were solid ice and the bridges from TX to OK were sheets of glass that shut down the interstates for 7-10 hours. I-35 in Denton County was so slick it was shut down for the better part of 2 days to trucks. Just about every other major highway where there are ramps and

bridges were blocked by 18 wheelers or accidents. It wasn't fun. Then the power went out to 300,000 homes including the N4CD residence Thursday night around midnight during the freezing rain. Nearly all the trees still had their leaves. That's about a million folks without power and 20 degree temps.

The antennas were coated with a good quarter to half inch of radial ice with the R5 vertical nicely coated and the radials bending down toward the ground. The big oak tree branches, with all the leaves, were bent down onto the roof and toward the ground. Next door, the neighbors two softwood trees had half of each on the ground as broken off branches. It was one of the worst storms in years. There was at least a 1/2 inch of ice on the streets here – and in some places 2-4 inches of ice. The truckers found you could have pot holes in the ice and it turned into 'cobblestone ice' with a rough slippery surface that stopped 18 wheelers dead in their tracks.

The local power company called in folks from hundreds of miles around but the power was out for 24-72 hours. Mine came back on after 45 hours. It was down to 47 inside the hamshack with the outside temps never making it out of the 20s during the day and dropping to the teens in many area at night. The grass, streets, sidewalks, driveways were nice sheets of ice, and you couldn't stomp down and get traction. The second day I made it down to the local MacD that had power back and spent my day there reading a book on the Enigma machine that took most of the day while munching on fast food and enjoying their semi-warmth.

The book is Seizing the Enigma – The Race to Break the German U-Boat codes, 1939 to 1943, by David Kahn. Good book - detailed – and I enjoyed reading it.

The MacD big breakfast special(eggs, sausage, pancakes with butter and syrup, biscuit, deep fried potato thingie) has 1300 calories. Wow. Well, I skipped the potato. Then had lunch and stayed there till near dinner time. Headed home before dark. Still no power. Rumors were it would be back on by midnight. I dunno why we go out all the time since our power in the subdivision is all underground, but it's the feeders along the main roads that seem to be the problem along with the giant distribution yards a few miles away. It almost makes one want to spring for a big standby generator – but we'd only get to use it once every three to five years – and then not for long.

A while back, I bought a nice sleeping bag for another week long trip to camp up in the Sierras, so I was set for sleeping. Other than a cold nose, did OK sleeping in the chill. Thank goodness for those LED flashlights that last a long time. Managed OK until the power finally came back on in the evening of the second day. I was halfway through the second book, the last in the series from Sue Grafton of murder who-dun-its - W is for Wasted.

I actually got started on the Sue Grafton murder mystery series out in Hawaii on the big island while doing the island hopping deal. Seems one evening after being out and running the county and playing tourist all day, and with the hotel on a busy strip with lots of traffic, I was

walking down the street from the hotel and found a second hand paperback book store. I wandered around killing time, and asked the sales person for something interesting to read. He suggested the Sue Grafton 'alphabet' series. I bought one of the first books – they start out with A is for Alibi, B is for Burglar, etc. Think they were 75c each for the paperbacks – used. The main character is a Private Investigator – Kinsey Millhone -female – out of the 1970s. The stories take place around Santa Theresa, a fictional town 90 miles north of Los Angeles. It's easy to get hooked on the series.

It's strange to have no internet, computer, ham radio (well, I could have sat in the mobile somewhere but no one was out running anyway!), lights, hot food at home. I did some reading by the gas log fireplace logs – which didn't do much for heating the house but at least provided some immediate warmth if you say close enough – and flickering light for reading a book. It makes you wonder what folks did 150 years ago before lights (kerosene lamps and early to bed). I guess if I had a nice wood stove, the house was set up differently, I ate a different diet not requiring much in the way of refrigeration/freezer, it would be a different story. If I knew the power would be out for 2 days, I would have snagged a motel room, but they were instantly snapped up by the power crews, other folks who didn't want to chance it, and visitors stuck in the area. 1400 flights out of DFW airport canceled. No one went anywhere easily. The power came back after 45 hours, the lights came on, the heat came on, and once again it was back to 21st century living. So it goes.

The frozen food did fine outside since it was in the 20s outside. Since the power was off, I had to quickly drain the pool filter, heater, and pump. Ice formed on the top of the pool and spa. Icicles were hanging off the edge of the roof. (Later as things warmed up just a bit, huge ice sheets were falling off building roofs around town – even made network news – as dozens of cars were totaled in parking lots by tons of falling ice coming down in sheets). Five days later and it still slow traffic, blocked lanes on the major highways, and hours and hours of delays going anywhere. At least the airport got back to normal after thousands of flights were canceled. It's a week later, and there is still ice on the pool and ice in the back yard. Yuk!

The power failure/freeze took out the manifold in the pool heater – leaked like a sieve – didn't get it drained and it cracked. Did that once before and it was 500 bucks to fix. Now its 23 years old and not worth fixing again. I didn't use it. More repairs to bypass it.

Our civilization would basically end if the electric supply ended due to an enemy EMP attack, cosmic event, super solar eruption, or similar. It wouldn't take more than 10 days before the food supply and food stores were stripped and all deliveries ended. Think about it someday – it's a scary prospect. Remember, 100 million firearms, people desperate for food, and just about nothing 'working.

Naturally the food stores ran out of bread and milk and potato chips and other junk food but that was back to normal a few days later.

The storm moved east and others got some of the bad weather as well. Did you catch the football game in Philly? A couple inches of snow during the game. They could do snow angels on the field after a touch down!

Now on to ham radio stuff. I'm appreciating my nice warm hamshack a lot more these days.

Later in the month, I see ice storms headed across OK in MO and over into OH, NY state – just the weekend before the xmas holiday so it will hard to travel and maybe they'll be power outages. It's winter time. (Winter started at 5:11 central time on Dec 21 – the Sotstice – the reason for the season)

2) Good month for USA-CA awards

Sometimes you go 3 or 6 months between the issuance of the CQ Magazine USA-CA award. Sometimes you get several in a month. The good news is this month several have finished up since the last report.

Welcome these county hunters to USA-CA 3077

USA-CA #1239	Tom, AD1B	Nov 29, 2013
USA-CA #1240	Mike, KA4RRU	Dec 7 , 2013
USA-CA #1241	Bill, K5WAF	Dec 9, 2013

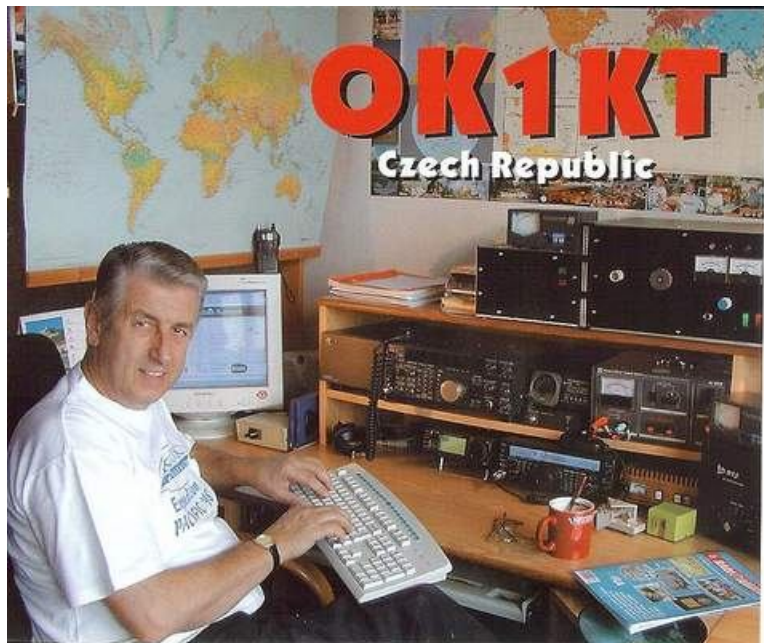
3) From the N4CD QSL File

Here's a picture of one of our DX County Hunters, Adolph, OE5KE, from his QSL card. He's got a big signal out of Austria



He's still working on his USA-CA 3077 so see if you can't help him get done!

This is another DX county hunter from his QSL card – OK1KT - working on first time. You might get an MRC from him if you're out and about.



OK1KT - Vrata

4) Peak Oil Update

From Jeffrey Brown:

Continuing with the the theme of capital costs per bpd of the average post-2005 increase in global crude oil production. . . . Of course, this is a back door way of saying we have basically peaked. As the incremental increase in production relative to a prior year approaches zero, the capital costs per barrel per day of incremental production approaches infinity.

In any case, Steven Kopits' data (from Barclays Capital) show that the global oil industry spent \$3.5 Trillion, or \$500 billion per year on average, for 2006 to 2012 inclusive on upstream (exploration and production) costs.

For 2006 to 2012 inclusive, global C+C production averaged 73.7 mbpd, versus 73.6 mbpd in 2005 (of course, almost all of the actual increase was in 2012).

So, in order to offset declines from existing production and to show an average increase of 0.1 mbpd (100,000 bpd) for 2006 to 2012 inclusive, the industry spent an average of \$500 billion per year, or a total of \$3,500 billion.

In the alternative, one could say that the industry spent \$35 million (per barrel per day of increased production) from 2006 to 2012 inclusive, to offset production declines and to show an average increase in production of one bpd for seven years. That's not a good trend for the future.

5) Mail Stop for Trips

Heading out of town on a trip? Need to stop the mail for a few days/week/weeks? You no longer have to use the big yellow cards from the post office. You can do it all on line!

<https://holdmail.usps.com/holdmail/>

Mobile Activity this period

Chuck, **W3CR**, was on a week long trip putting out Iowa counties on SSB.

W7IN was spotted heading west to CA from his summer QTH – for the winter.

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KB0BA Lowell/ **N0XYL** Sandra, were out the whole week putting out IA and WI counties on SSB. Occasionally Lowell would run one on CW.

Lowell Noted:

“Our trip to Allen Co., IN took us south to Parke county and then north through a number of counties until we reached Ft. Wayne. Don't remember the mileage, but it was a typical 'county hunter' route. Our second trip of the month took us through northern Iowa to Minnesota and then through the top tier of counties in Wisconsin before heading south to Lincoln county for Thanksgiving. We didn't go shopping on Black Friday -- not us. We ran Lincoln, Langlade, Menominee, Shawano, and Marathon. All in all, we ran 38 counties and traveled a little over 1630 miles before getting home again on December 1st. There was even some CW along the way. Thanks to all who 'rode' with us. “

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K4YT, Karl, zipped on down to NC and put out the counties along the way.

AF3X, Jeffrey, ran Meigs, Sequatchie, Bledsoe, Van Buren TN

Don, **W0EAR**, ran some in MN/WI.

Scottie, **N4AAT**, put out a few in SC.

W5IL was in MD running the entire state on SSB.

Max, **N9CJH**, was putting them out from the Big Rig

AA9JJ Frank, and **N9QPQ** Kay, put out a few in AZ. We had a day of less only 9 spots total for the entire day on the 28th Turkey day. Either no one was around to spot or no one went mobile.

Alan, **KO7X** headed back from the SLC, UT area to WY.

Doug, **WA4UNS**, headed up to NJ and was running them on SSB and data modes.

Ron, **KB6UF**, headed north from LA through AR to OK then proceeded west to CA along the interstate.

Jim, **N4JT** headed up in the south central VA and put out a few for the folks.

Eddie, **G4KHG**, was noted on PSK from Kauai, HI

Mike, **KA4RRU**, was noted out and about many days in Nov/Dec. One day he headed down to Powhatan – and was running on frequencies up to up to 24.915.5 MHz (12M) on the way back.

KC7QOP was out on the highway

WD4OIN, Jack, was on from James City, Charles City, and Surry, VA among others. Next weekend he put out a few more in VA.

KE3VV, Dave, was on from FL putting them out on SSB and CW.

Jim, **K0ARS**, showed up on 20M CW.

Joyce, **N9STL**, headed from IL down to FL for the winter months. She took a multi -day trip through AR, LA, MS, GA to FL.

W3DQT was noted on in MD.

K0MAF was out in GA and FL.

Rick, **W5QP**, put out a bunch in AR, and headed over to MS to snag a few for the folks on CW.

Ray, **AB4YZ**, headed out from VA into TN, KY over to MO. SSB only.

Alan, **KO7X**, headed west once again from Laramie, WY to the Salt Lake City area.

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Ryan, **KB9OWD**, was out in WI. He noted on the K3IMC forum

“Thanks everyone for your patience Monday as I gave the new mobile setup a good test run. Had the morning free and got a few things worked out that I needed to with the setup and gave out a few Wisconsin LC to the folks. Good activity for a Monday morning and managed 223 QSO's across 7 counties. This included Outagamie - 37, Calumet - 33, Winnebago - 30, Waushara - 50, Green Lake - 41, Fond du Lac - 28 and Dodge (Home county) - 4. I appreciate

everyone's patience as I worked out a few things with the new setup and I think things are good to go now. Nice to work a lot of familiar calls and several that I haven't run into before having not done much mobile. I hope to be on the week after Christmas putting out several needs for folks in SW Wisconsin. 73 Ryan KB9OWD “

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Gene, NT2A, ran Hudson, NJ for the folks. Not many good spots to stop and run there. Lots of QRN.

Book Review(s) of the Month

Radio-Phone Boys Books - Part I

I found another series of books from the 1922 era titled the Radio-Phone Boys books. This series was a copycat series, similar to the Radio Boys, Tom Swift, the Radio Girl books and other adventure books written by the Stratemeyer Syndicate for the youth market.

I've found the following titles after a bit of research. The true author of these Radio-Phone Boys books was Judson Snell who sometimes used the pseudonym James Craig. I have not found any of these on-line other than the first one, yet but I expect they will be there in the future on Project Gutenberg or similar. Now, your only option is reading an actual paper book for most of the series.

The Radio-Phone Boys – Curlie Carson Listens In #1 – on line - 1922

On the Yukon Patrol #2

The Desert Patrol* #3 by Craig 1923

The Sea Going Tank #4*

The Flying Sub * #5

Dark Treasures #6

Whispering Isles #7

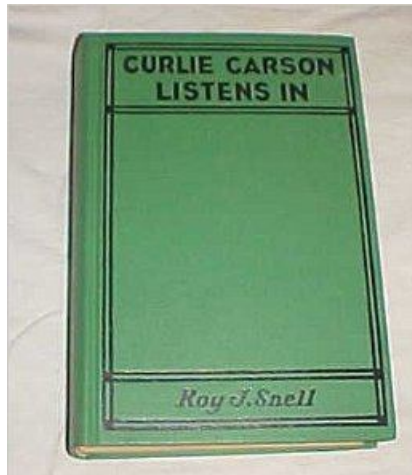
The Invisible Wall #8 – 1928

For a few bucks and a click on the internet, a few of them came flying in the door – cheap copies(\$5-8) and likely I'll recoup my money at the next Antique Wireless gathering by passing them on to the next reader. If you want one with original dust jackets, you can get them, too, in good condition, but for \$20-120 a copy, even after 100 years or so. I've found all 8 of the books for sale on line – probably averaging about \$5 per book bought, plus \$3-4 to ship it to TX. You can also buy some of these as new reprint paperback books. Some of the used books were \$2.99 on line and the shipping was more than the book! Also snagged another series book for \$4.39 including shipping. Such a deal!

Apparently the success of the series dropped as time went on, and the plans for more books never happened. So it ends at book 8. The last few were terrible, too – no radio involved.

So we'll start with the first 3 of the series.

The Radio Phone Boys – Curlie Carson Listens In



Here's how it starts out:

Behind locked and barred doors, surrounded by numberless mysterious-looking instruments, sat Curlie Carson. To the right of him was a narrow window. Through that window, a dizzy

depth below, lay the city. Its square, flat roofs formed a mammoth checker-board. Between the squares criss-crossed the narrow black streets. Like a white chalk-line, drawn by a careless child, the river wound its crooked way across this checker-board.

To the left of him was a second narrow window. Through this he caught the dark gleam of the broad waters of Lake Michigan. Here and there across the surface twinkled the 10 lamps of a vessel, or flashed the warning beacon of a lighthouse.

A boy in his late teens was Curlie. Slender, dark, with coal-black eyes, with curls of the same hue clinging tightly to his well-shaped head, he had the strong profile and the smooth tapering fingers that might belong to an artist, a pickpocket or a detective.

An artist Curlie was, an artist in his line—radio. Although still a boy, he was already an operator of the "commercial, extra first-class" type. So far as license and title were concerned, he could go no higher. A pickpocket he was not, but a detective he might be thought to be; a strange type of detective, however, a detective of the air; the kind that sits in a small room hundreds of feet in air and listens; listens to the schemes, the plots, the counterplots of men and to the wild babble of fools. His task was that of aiding in the capture of knaves and the silencing of foolish folks who used the newly-discovered radiophone as their mouthpiece. "Foolish people," Major Whittaker, Curlie's superior, who had called him to the service, had said, "do quite as much damage to the radio service as crooks. Fools and knaves must alike be punished and your task will be to help catch them."

Wonderful ears had Curlie Carson, perhaps the most wonderful ears in the world. In catching the fine shadings of diminishing sounds which came to him through the radio compass, there was not a man who could excel him.

So Curlie sat there surrounded by wire-wrapped frames, coils, keys, buttons, switches, motors, dry-cells, storage batteries and all the odds and ends which made up the equipment of the most perfect listening-in station in the world.

As he sat there with Joe Marion, his pal, by his side, his brow was wrinkled in thought. He was reviewing the events of the previous night. At 1:00 a.m., the witching hour when the crooked ones, the mean ones, come creeping forth like ghosts to carry on doubtful conversations by radio, a strange thing had happened. A message had gone crashing out through space. Wave lengths 1200 meters long sped it on its way. There was power enough behind it to carry it from pole to pole, but all it had said was:

"A slight breeze from the west."

Three times the message had been repeated, then had come silence. There had been no answer though Curlie had listened long for it on 1200 meter wave lengths and five other lengths as well.

Sudden as had come the message, fleet as had been its passing, it had not been too fleet for Curlie. He had compassed its direction; measured its distance. On a map of the city which lay before him he had made a pencil cross and said:

"It came from there."

And he was right for, strange as it may seem, an expert such as Curlie can sit in a hidden tower room such as his was and detect the exact location of a station whose message has set his ear drums aquiver. The location had puzzled him. There was not a station in the city licensed to send 1200 meter wave lengths. The spot he had marked was the location of the city's most magnificent apartment hotel. The hotel possessed a radiophone set. Its antenn[ae], hung high upon the building's roof, were capable of carrying that 1200 meter message with all that power behind it, but the radio equipment of the hotel had no such power.

"Something crooked about that," he had mumbled to himself.

His first impulse had been to call the police. He did not act upon it. They might blunder. The thing might get out. This law-breaker might escape. Not five people in all the world knew of Curlie's detecting station. He would work out this problem alone.

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There's loads of adventure after Curlie finally locates a rogue transmitting on 600 meters, the international distress frequency. It's a mobile unit and takes a bit to track down. That leads to an adventure to a mysterious 'treasure island' 500 miles off the east coast of the US. Curlie chases the bad guys in a seaplane and Curlie is in a yacht. There's a giant nor'easter blowing and both are in mortal danger.

Needless to say, Curlie manages to rescue the misguided reckless youths, and its 200 pages of decent adventure. Of course, the man who was transmitting on 1200 meters took off for Alaska and Curlie is sent to track him down in in the second book in the series!

You can find this book on line at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19351>

It's the only one in the series on line now, but I found all the others for under 10 bucks a book and figure I can easily turn around and get my money back out of them. It's keeping me busy when nothing is on the boob -toob at night. As it turns out, only the first book is really worth reading!

The Radio Phone Boys – Yukon Patrol

This is the second book in the series and I just happened to find an inexpensive copy on the Web on abebooks.com , so with a click of the mouse and a few bucks it was on it's way to Collin County Texas. Up until a few months ago, I didn't even know this series of books existed.

We find Joe, who is a Secret Service of the Air employee, one of the best, is sent to Alasska. It seems that someone is intentionally jamming radio transmissions from polar explorer Munson, and likely this same outlaw is also the leader of a jewel smuggling operation between Russia and Alaska. It turns out to be the same person jamming communications on 1200 meters in book 1 in the series.

So our two young men, Curlie and Joe, join up with an experienced arctic trekker Jennings and set out from Valdez, over the Valdez glacier, to go up the '98er gold miner trail up to the Yukon (you have to forgive a lot of lack of geographical truth in the book). After trudging up the pass with 3 dog sled teams and a months worth of provisions, they are hot on the trail of the outlaw. He continues to send messages on 1200 meters to someone. At the same time, Munson is attempting to reach the north pole using airplanes (this is 1920 or so) and not having much luck.

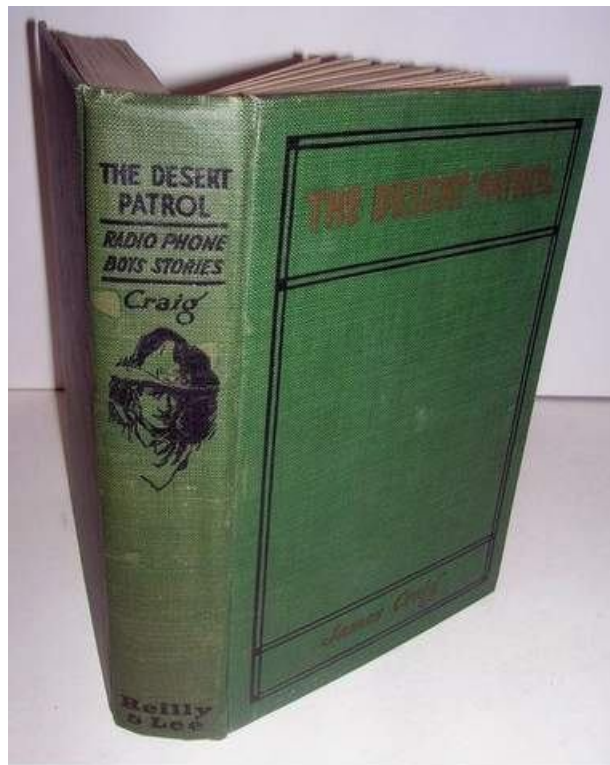
One of the mysterious helpers in this book is the 'Whisperer' who provides hints for Curlie to follow to find his prey. She was in book 1 but only to mention the fellow who took off for Alaska after using 1200 meters without a license. There are the usual type adventures, temperatures down to 30 below, days of going miles and miles in the arctic wasteland and over the tundra. Curlie winds up without a sled and then finds a 'reindeer' sled. Munson crashes all 3 of his planes and has to abandon all his supplies. Needless to say, Curlie, Joe and the polar trekker Jennings manage to rescue them. The radio is used throughout – both the 'big set' and 'portable sets' they carry with them at all times. It's amazing how they always manage to talk to each other and get the needed messages sent, but, heck, you just suspend reality and enjoy the fiction.

It's a couple hour read, but I haven't found on it on line YET. Give it a few years!

The Radio Phone Boys – The Desert Patrol

This is the 3rd in the Radio-Phone Boys after Curlie Listens In and the Yukon Patrol, all written by “James Craig” (Snell). The same characters tend to be in each one so there is some continuity.

It's the number 11,302,955th most popular book on Amazon dot com!



To give you a sense of the book, it starts out:

“As had been the case in some of his other adventures, it had been a whisper, a whisper floating in over the air, that had led him to his present position. At first this whisper had been vague and undefined, yet telling of something big going on down in the Great American Desert, close

to the Mexican border. The radiophone was being used as an aid by those who wished to thwart justice and rob others of their honest earnings. If this was the case, then here was a task for the members of the Secret Service of the Air, of whom Curlie was one. He had been sent to the desert to establish a listening post there and to discover if possible whether or not such a post could be of real service to the American citizens who lived here and there, scattered over the desert and through the forests of mountain ranges.

He had come. He had set his steel posts, like flag posts, high in the air out in the desert. On these posts he had strung his antennas. Beneath the posts he had built a cabin of lumber and tar paper. There, with his powerful receiving and sending set at his elbow and with his head-piece drawn down over his ears, he had sat down to wait and to listen.

The message of importance, which he felt sure would at least come to him from the lips of the "Whisperer", that weird phantom-girl of the air, might, he knew quite well, have to do with any of a half dozen important affairs. It might concern whiskey runners, bringing the rawest and rankest kind of poison across the border from Mexico, peddling it alike to white men and Indians."

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Curlie is there as an employee of the Secret Service of the Air Patrol – to monitor the airwaves and catch those using them illegally for gain or for crime. He sets up a 'wireless outpost' in the desert to coordinate things. His opponents also have wireless to listen in. In this book, everyone talks – never any code, which is sort of strange, but that's the way it is. Timeframe – 1915-1920.

There seems to be a 'formula' for these. In every one, there is a kidnapping, thrilling escapes, being chased by gangs of bad guys, escapes, thwarting the bad guys at every turn and outsmarting them, and then working hard to overcome the problem. Always a few fist fights.

This one has renegade Mexicans and Indians, a lawless leader of a horse theft ring, the 'Whisperer' who turns out to be a young girl, a brave stallion who saves the day, flash floods in the mountains, sandstorms and almost certain death escapes, other rescues, and only the bad guys die. Just a small bit of wireless. Easy read, and each chapter seems to complete an episode. So it would make for a good weekly 'serial program' on the radio, which was in vogue at the time. Tune in next week to find out if Curlie escapes from being killed in the flash flood. Will he ever find out who the "Whisperer" is, the one who has given him clues to the outlaws whereabouts?

Not a bad couple hour read. I haven't found it on line yet, but likely in a few years it will join the dozens of others on line that you can read for free. Bought it for a few bucks and will sell it for a few bucks. Next in the series is the Sea-Going tank (#4 in the series) which we'll review in a few months.

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So that's the first three books in the series – we'll take a look at the next 3 in a couple of months. The first one is the best.

These were 'juvenile fiction' for the 10-16 year old type kids. No TV, no radio – or barely the start of radio. Of course, everyone 'knew' about 'wireless' from the sinking of the Titanic 10 years earlier, so this was a 'hot topic' for kids to learn about and experiment with. Kids were beginning to build radios in the early 1920s as broadcasting stations showed up. Hams were talking to each other with spark outfits, then the first vacuum tube sets. The times they were 'a changing'.

On the Road with N4CD I

The annual trek to Montgomery County Maryland for turkey day with the family began toward the end of November. This year, Thanksgiving came at the very end of the month. It's not always always the fourth Tuesday – for a long time it was the last Thursday. On rare occasions there will even be a fifth Thursday in November, but a while back the date was set by the government as the fourth Thursday. This year it was later in the month. So the car was backed for the 1335 mile trip – the short way – according to MapQuest. I've seldom made it there in that few miles and this year was no exception. There were some counties to run along the way.

I'd already finished off Mobile Diamond counties along the way, and the 500 required transmits, so I'd try and hit a few for other folks – some of them off the interstate. The only counties remaining for MD were in GA and that was 'too far' out of the way on the trip back east. Gary, K4EXT, needed some signs for the database.

The Texas weather had been cold. A nasty cold spell dropped temps to a high of 34 degrees on a few days. Brrr. That's 20-30 degrees below normal here and close to the record. There was even talk of freezing rain/sleet coming up. I'd have to carefully dodge the days of bad weather to get out of TX without massive traffic jams or creeping traffic.

Saturday

Unlike many years, the big CQ WW DX CW contest was going on this weekend of departure.

Usually it messes up the bands on my trip home, but this year it was the weekend before since Turkey day was late in the month. That contest makes a total mess out of the normal cw frequencies, but with 30m and 17m, we would have places to go, and 14.113 worked out OK. At times there was some 'data drivell' there but most of the time it was usable. As long as someone is around monitoring the frequency and spotting, the folks show up.

I have 14.113 in the memory of the IC-706 so it is easy to switch there on a few days a year we need to use it. Probably wouldn't be too bad an idea for others to put it in their radios for those 'contest days' and it beats trying to tune your mobile rig or home station rig there from the 'normal' frequencies. On 40M...well,that's often a difficult situation. My antenna won't resonate well at 7110 or 7122 which some have used in the past. During the day, 7056.5 might be OK till late afternoon when the EU stations fill the band. I was busy enough with 20/17/30 and one band of SSB.

Oh, it looks like the one who 'occupies' 14.336 was off for the day on Saturday. Heck, that means as well as CW, I could put out a few on 14 SSB easily. Of course, with self spotting, that's a whole lot easier than in the past to go off net freq but I'm usually mostly cw mobile as I cruise along. I'm not going to try spotting and driving. No way. So the first day I spent a bunch of time on SSB headed up I-30 to I-40 across in TN running on 336. Some county hunters are only SSB so it is good to hook up with them every now and then. I had to 'make tracks' at least part of the time getting back east otherwise it would be a slow trip, plus keep ahead of the bad weather that would be right behind me.

In Texas, the trees still have most of their leaves. As you head north – you see half the trees in AR along the interstate have lost their leaves – the others are about to drop them all. By the time you get to TN, it is bare trees along the interstates and the sun shines through them, flickering annoyingly as you drive along. Winter has arrived – well,not officially yet till the Solstice....but the trees say it's winter time as you head northeast. AR also has lots of pine trees in the SW corner – like east Texas. I'm not a tree expert. I know the tree in my front yard is an oak tree because it drops acorns – and the squirrels love them. Don't ask me much about other trees.

Bob, KC1NA, needed just two to finish up his Master's Gold award for working all the counties part of the award. While he's not on mobile much these days, just putting out some in Maine every now and then, when I first started county hunting – he and Dennis, KK7X, kept the county hunter net going many many days as they crisscrossed the country in the Big Rig trucks. There were a few others but I don't recall who. Ralph, WB4FFV, was also very active back then in the Big Rig. Dennis, KK7X, was on both SSB and CW and Bob on SSB.

Way back then, I met Dennis at a truck stop in Dallas for the first time back in the 1990s, and Miss Ida and I met Bob, KC1NA over at a truck stop east of Dallas way back when. She even got to sit in the 'big rig' seat. Ralph, WB4FFV, was down in Texas one time and we had an eyeball. There's a few Big Rig drivers still on the road putting them out for the folks – and on

many days, they might be the only ones on.

Bob and Dennis filled in hundreds and hundreds of counties for N4CD and N2TPH back then. It turned out the two that Bob, KC1NA, needed for MG were Van Burn, TN, and Monroe WV, which weren't too far off the route. Well, not 'too far' when you have a couple extra hours built in on each day. I could take a couple days to get to Maryland – it was two very very long days, or 3 comfy days of driving with a few short detours – or it could take me four or five days to get there as in the past as long as I got there by Wed night. Oh, and miss any bad weather! (the trip used to take place in December but after two consecutive blizzards in WV the date was moved up to November each year thereafter).

On the Saturday I left, it was a dreary winter day and it was drizzling – not great driving weather but it had been above freezing for the past 36 hours and would be 'warmer' going northeast. I met with the 'late breakfast group' that meets weekly on Saturday morning here in Plano before 7am. People arrive at 6-6:30am. The food arrives just after 7am. Didn't have much time to yak and greet that day – left and on the road at 'sunrise' at 7:25 am more or less headed toward MD. Just above freezing. On Friday before we had some sleet – and Sunday we were expecting freezing rain again! Yuk. Time to get out while the getting out is good! I would have rather left a day or two later. This was the 'window' of weather to be gone! Nature doesn't always give you good choices.

The first day went OK...drizzled all the way to the AR border then was just overcast for the rest of the day and a bit warmer. Ran a lot of counties on SSB – why not? Got to say hi to a lot of SSB only operators again, too. Made it over to the TN border then stopped by dark at a Super 8 Motel in Jackson, Madison County, TN. Dinner at the Barnhill Buffet (very good). I usually stop in the winter time before sunset. The bands can fade away at that time, too.

Sunday

Breakfast at the Super 8 – waffles! I indulged. Nice motel. Super 8 motels in this part of the country are usually a decent value.

This morning it was back to mostly cw (14.113 and 30/17) and some 40M SSB. The big DX CW contest was still going on. You zip through the counties fast enough so you don't have time to run 20/40 SSB and the 4 bands for cw unless you stop and I was making tracks. Mr Grouchy was back on 14.336 running off mobiles and innocent passer by types. The route was east on I-40 to past Nashville (Davidson) County. I tried to snap a few more pics for the County Sign database. Some on the interstate are just too 'busy' to try and stop and get a pic. When there's a line of 18 wheelers with one 200 feet behind you and a narrow shoulder – well, just forget about pulling over. Those will have to be some other road, or maybe when two folks are in a car and one can drive and the other take the pic while doing 60 mph, hi hi.

Then it was off the 'beaten path' to get to DeKalb, Cannon and Van Buren. There were some

great pile ups as the ones off the interstate are not run as much as they others. When I stop, I can spot on 14347 or some other mostly empty freq on 20M SSB, and also get up to 17M at a county line or dead end county stop. I gave Bob, KC1NA a jingle on the phone when I got to Van Buren and we hooked up on 14347 with no problems. He's got a big signal out of Maine. He did the relays. One down, one to go for him. That was a 'wet line' so I had to run it as a 'single'. 500 feet past the county line going south is a nice boat launch parking area off to the right side of the road.



Van Buren TN – next to LC WBOW for KC1NA

Greg, NM2L, got his next to last in TN in Dekalb– he mentioned he needed Union TN to finish the state. Hmm.... well, not on the 'going' part of the trip. I was taking lots of Percy Pics along the way.

Then it was back to the interstate and more trekking to the east, running them as I went through them. Hit Cumberland County and that's where you change to Eastern Time. Lost an hour – it was an hour later. That night I made it over to Greene County on I-81 headed up toward Virginia. Another Super 8 Motel in Bulls Gap, TN. This was a Sunday night...and readers of the CHNews know what that means! Pizza night! Nearby was a Pizza Plus pizza emporium. I got there just at 5pm (was already getting 'dusk' at the western edge of the Eastern Time zone. By the time I was done 45 min later it was getting 'dark'.)

Apparently that's a chain – and good. Nice buffet set out each night for \$7.99 including a very nice salad bar and a drink included. Good deal. Probably ate too much. Four or five pizzas out on the buffet at a time, all you wanted to drink, and all the salad bar you wanted. Good

pizza, too!

Prices at the Super 8 are very competitive in this part of the county. Plus you get a nice breakfast. This one was a bit more than the rest but still OK. Motels aren't all that filled up along the interstate these days unless you hit a town with a re-union, wedding, college event or something else going on.

Monday

Breakfast at the Super 8 - waffles! I indulged. Wow....there is likely 400-500 calories in the waffle, plus, of course, any butter or syrup you add. Frozen waffles are less. But they are good! Sometimes they have 'low cal' syrup but most of the times not. I'll just burn up the calories county hunting! (dream on, right!).

Now it was time to zip up I 81 to the I-77 headed north to Mercer WV then over on 460 going east. That gets you over near Monroe, WV – and a couple mile side trip on highway 219 takes you right over into Monroe, WV. There's a jog to the right and a quick jog to the left to stay on 219. You can't stop at that county line of Monroe WV/Giles VA. Well, not for long. You'll get run over. It's a narrow 2 lane road over a narrow bridge (wet C/L) with a right angle right after the C/L as you head into the small picturesque town down in a 'valley' (holler). Lots of QRN right there too.

Wow..that highway 460 sure looks familiar.....for at least 10 years, I headed from central VA (Campbell County) on 460 west over to the WV turnpike then over to Dayton OH year after year in my 1975 Ford Econoline E150 Window Van. (13.5 mpg on a trip back then). Ah, yes..... well, so much for nostalgia...now I'm getting 30+ mph – but sure can't haul as much as that van did! I usually slept overnight in the back on a 2 inch foam mattress with sleeping bag at one of the rest areas on the WV Turnpike having left right after work and driving half way there. Then on to Dayton very early on Friday morning. Back then, the flea market didn't open till noon. Well, I was in my 20s-30s then. No problem at all then sleeping in the van in a rest area on a 2 inch thick foam mattress. Now I'd get a motel room! Hi hi. I still enjoy going to Dayton 35-40 years later. (that's where I got my “4” call in VA, too). I'd head home after the day on Saturday – making it halfway home to the rest area on the WV turnpike – or maybe even stay part of Sunday if it had been raining – and drive the whole way home. Those were the days. Well, back to 2013 and today's county hunting. I wasn't a county hunter back then.

I entered Monroe WV and found a nice church parking lot 'up' from the town at the second left and start running the county. A bit of QRN but manageable. Two other cars in the big parking lot. No answer at the KC1NA phone. Barely have a cellphone connection – got to stand outside the car. Hmm..... Well, there's a good pile up and it keeps me busy. KC1NA is a no show. Kill 30 minutes waiting. No answer. Dang...last county for the whole ball of wax and a 'no show'. What's going on? I'd gone 100 miles out of the way to get this. Hmmm. Well,

lots of others needed it too – it doesn't get run that often. There's no reason to go there other than if you're a county hunter! There wasn't any reason to 'drive through it, either as it wasn't on the way to anywhere either!

My previous thoughts were to run some others in WV before heading into the DC area. The weather was good – but chilly. That changed quickly as it turned out.

Well, I can't sit there for too long. The weather forecast is getting ominous. Larry, N2OCW and I yak on 7188. The weather front is coming through a half day early. WV will get lots of ice, sleet and freezing rain, and up to 8-12 inches of snow **that night**– and it will extend over into VA. Yuk! Not the stuff to be caught in. Time to make some real fast tracks. I'll have to get out of the Shenandoah Valley – might as well go the other 50 miles to my sister's house in MD once out of that long valley that I-81 runs down. The fun part of the trip was over. Time to head to 'safe harbor'. Why does WV hate me? Every time I go through there in the winter, the weather dumps on me! (or I get stuck in a ditch)

It's not too hard to get out of Monroe, WV back onto 460 (Giles County) headed through Blacksburg and over to the Roanoke VA area, then zip up I-81 to I-66 to the DC Beltway and then around to Gaithersburg MD in Montgomery County MD. It's 300 plus miles and the speed limit is 70. Traffic is moving at 75. It takes about 5 hours to hit the 'beltway' around Washington, D.C.

An hour later, after I've left Monroe, WV, KC1NA calls - he was 'called in' and had to leave for a couple hours. Figured he'd be back home in time. Nope. Well, dang..... not going back today – it was 75 miles behind me at this point.

The only fly in the ointment with the plan to avoid the snow/ice/sleet will be hitting the DC beltway at rush hour which one should not plan on doing. But it was that or stopping for a long dinner, then drive in the dark so I opted to see what would transpire as I headed in. Or I could stay over night and maybe get some of that freezing rain/drizzle. I would have liked to run some more WV counties.....but the weather was moving in this night. Hmmm... You need to be flexible in the winter time. I've seen ALL THE SNOW I ever want to see on trips through WV in past years.

Things went well until I hit 495 beltway. Made great time. All the traffic was coming 'out' and congested from the beltway out with stop and go traffic. Got to 495 with no delays, headed north (inner loop for you DC folks). Then 2 miles later it came to a screeching halt and it was 5-10 mph stop and go for the next hour getting over the bridge into MD and around to I-270 headed north. Yuk Yuk Yuk. A million people were leaving DC for the Thanksgiving holiday....but not enough of them yet. They were all clogging up the roads. An accident didn't help – sat for 20 minutes going nowhere. I arrived at 7pm at sister's house and that was it for going north on this leg of the trip. Shut down the radio. Traffic is still horrible in DC any rush hour.

Other than the traffic mess at the end, it was a good trip there – well, the missed connection in Monroe, WV didn't go well, either. . Gave out some rarer counties and a couple LC's. Put them out on CW, and 20M SSB the first day, and 40M SSB the second day. Ran the rare ones on SSB while stopped and could spot/be spotted.

Missed most of the real bad weather. That's a big plus!

Chuck, W3CR was putting out most of IA – caught him in a few and gave him my county. Don't know how many he needed for MD along the way, but safer to work first, worry later. He could sort them out. Not too many others out mobile – despite 'holiday travel season'. Doug, WA4UNS, headed up to NJ to put out a bunch there. W5IL was up in MD running the whole state. Never heard him as he and Doug were on 20M only I think.

The rest of the sister's family was coming in on Wed and Thursday so I could just 'chill' for a couple days. No need to go 'shopping' or anything else. Who wants to be anywhere near a mall at this frenzied time of year? The local newspaper weighed an extra couple of pounds with all the ads for 'sales'.

It it rained on Tuesday in MD with lots of snow in WV....up to a foot in places...and sleet and freezing rain on Tuesday NW of the DC area – no fun trying to run counties in WV then. We had a few snow flurries on Wed afternoon in the DC area. It was just cold, wet, and damp. Yuk – real winter with lows near 20 and highs in the 30s. Likely rained a good inch.

My sister had 22 people over for Thanksgiving day dinner.....whew.....and the new grand nephew..... He'd sit for 30 seconds and then be crawling somewhere....almost thinking about walking....almost...as long as he is holding on to something. But he goes up stairs and crawls like greased lightning. I ate a lot of turkey and everything else. They say the average thanksgiving dinner has 4500 calories. I didn't scrimp.

Hope everyone had a nice Turkey day and got to see some family/friends. Or keep in touch via other means.

Friday

I decided to leave on Friday headed back to TX. After being there in MD for 3 days, there was no need to hang around and the rest of the sister's family was headed out to visit the other side of their family for the weekend. So it would be quiet again. Time to leave and run some counties. I'd already gained a few pounds. It was cold morning and I had to scrape off some heavy frost on the car. First I had to find the ice scraper buried somewhere with the junk behind the front seat! You just don't need that often in TX, and even less if you have a garage. Only on country hunting trips! Took five minutes of warming up the car before I could get

underway and defrost the windows. 22 degrees. Brrr.

I left at 'sunrise' hitting the beltway hopefully before it got clogged up. It was a 'day off' for many and the traffic was light around 495(outer loop) to I-66 headed back west. Nothing new – I was headed back to Monroe, WV via the same route to try a second time to get KC1NA done. Put them out on the normal CW freqs. No contest QRM today and that was nice. Chuck, W3CR was out and Lowell, KB0BA and Sandra, N0XYL would be on in WI. I'd work them and give them my county. W5IL was up in MD putting out the whole state on 20M SSB. Never heard him. There wasn't any other reasonable way to get to Monroe, WV, either.

The police were out in force. Every county along I-66 had at least one speed trap. Every county along I-81 down to Blacksburg had a speed trap. It was as if they all agreed upon massive enforcement today on the highways. I took it easy and no more than five over.

It was five hours back to Monroe WV – and this time, I hooked up with KC1NA from the same church parking lot.....and he is done, done, finished for the MG counties part of the award. It turned out that WB0PYF also needed Monroe for a LC....so that was nice as well. Worth the trip back and the detour.



Monroe WV – LC WBOW MG for KC1NA

Whoa...what's this white stuff...?? Snow on the sides of the road in Monroe WV.....in the grass....and as I head southwest from there...lots of snow on the hillsides. Here's one in Tazewell VA



Snow everywhere but the road in VA

It was 44 degrees and the road was perfectly clear, but it was a 'winter wonderland' everywhere else with snow on roof tops, on the grass and hillsides. It's not officially winter but they must have had a fair amount of snow there on the Tuesday before. Glad I wasn't there to see it coming down! Nice to look at it now.

Since I don't like to go the same route if I can help it....I took 460 going southwest to get some new counties – back through Mercer WV and into Tazewell, Russell, and Washington, VA. Karl, K4YT, had just been in this neck of the woods headed on down to Letcher KY for a LC WBOW for WB4KZW. If he hadn't gone, I would have made it to Letcher. Saved me some driving. Heck, I was just there in Letcher 3 months ago, too!

Some one wanted Scott....well....if you get back on I-81...and head down to exit 1 and get on highway 58, it's about 7 miles over to the county line. It was about 10 years ago that Ralph, WB4FFV (think it was him) needed this and someone said 'it's not far off the interstate'. True...but it's 35-40 mph type road.....twists and turns. I get to the County Line....and then had to decide. Do I run it stopped at the line or near it....for just Scott...or keep driving on 58...then hit the highway south in 25 miles? It can take 15 minutes to run all the bands..and then you back track to the interstate 7 miles (12-15 minutes). Hmmm.. I decide to keep driving west on 58....I'll hit I 181 at Kingsport area then back to the interstate. Hmmm...well, 58 twists and turns for 30 miles.....so you don't make time. It took about half the distance to put out the county, the rest of the time was just winding along the roads wishing it would end – hi hi. “Scenic” - equals slow.

Eventually I got back to I-181 to I-81.....and soon it was getting dark so it was time to look for a motel. Stopped in Dandridge TN (Jefferson County) at a Super 8 Motel. There was a

Shoney's right across the street and walked over to it. Dark.....by the time I walked back to the Super 8 it was really dark. . I dunno what's with the 'pillow escalation' but this motel had six 'mini pillows'. Half size pillows and six of them. I only need one good size pillow. Two is really good. No more than that! Please! I don't need 4 or 6 pillows on my bed. Cut the price a buck. If I want 8 pillows I'll stay at a Hilton.

Saturday

Breakfast at the Super 8 - waffles! I indulged. More unneeded calories but they are GOOD! I refuse to buy a waffle maker for home. I'd pig out too often. So waffles while traveling are a 'treat'. I'll keep it that way.

Then it was on the road at daylight headed toward Union County TN for Greg, NM2L, his LC for the state. You zip around Knoxville on I-640 bypass to the north. You can take 441 north – which is also 33. I took the long way getting there as I missed that turn – not marked well with the route numbers. Detour wasn't bad.

Highway 33 goes right up into Union County – one of the 'poorest' if not the 'poorest' county in the state. One of the folks I talk to on the bulletin boards lived there for 10 years and taught school there. He can tell you some interesting tales about the place. Think 'as far in the back woods as you can get' and you got the idea. Not much different than Hancock or Hawkins, either. Not a whole lot goes on in Union County. It's not that hard to get too...but...,like many counties, it's a 15 mile detour off the interstate and you'll be there for 30 minutes running the county – so figure an hour 'side trip'. Success with NM2L and a page full of other contacts. Then it was back down 441/33 to the I-640 bypass and back on course toward home.



Union County TN, LC for NM2L

I trekked across all of TN.....took a five mile detour to Overton, TN – another 'close to the interstate but not run often county' – and actually 'gained' an hour changing time zones and made it over to just inside AR.

On the way up to MD, there had been a hour long construction delay headed east in Prairie County AR. The interstate was down to one lane each way for 15 or 20 miles. Slowed me down going to MD and expected it to be even worse and it was a 20 mile back up going west when I was going east. There was a LOT of traffic on the interstate Saturday evening....so I decided to stop a bit early, then hit that part of the interstate at 7am in the morning and slide on through there hopefully with no hassles. With luck, I'd be home by mid afternoon in TX.

That night, I stopped at West Memphis, AR at the Super 8 (\$39.95 plus tax). Only 2 pillows on the bed. Ate next door at the Iron Skillet at the Pilot Truck Stop. Walked over. Convenient. Buffet or menu options.

Before I went QRT for the day, Kerry, W4SIG, had asked if I could run Cross AR the next day. Sure thing....it's about 4-5 miles off the interstate at exit 256. It would be a LC for him. We'd try and connect at 7:30 the next morning. That's another one you can run with minimal additional miles– but likely a 30-45 minute side trip.

Sunday

Breakfast at the Super 8 – waffles! I indulged. I'm bulging from too many waffles!.....Maybe I need to stay at Motel 6 again? There you only get coffee for breakfast.

Then it was on the road at sunrise – about 6:45 there. Weather good – temp 49 deg. Beats the 22 deg it was up in MD. Overcast. Traffic was light for the interstate as it was a stone's throw from the motel and you could easily see it.

I hit the interstate and see the signs ' Construction Ahead - Consider alternate route'. It's just after the turn off for Cross. If you are headed on I-40 through Prairie – take note. The traffic was light at that time Zipped along from exit 280 (motel) down to exit 256. No construction yet. It's about 3 miles up to the C/L. It used to be really noisy on 40M SSB – 20 over. Quiet now – they fixed things. Caught up with Kerry, W4SIG and Cross, AR went in his log on 40cw. Took a Percy Pic. Took lots of Percy Pics. Ran it all cw bands then back to the interstate.



Cross, AR – LC for W4SIG

No problem through the construction zone in Prairie.....went through it at 55 mph...one lane for 20 miles it seems. Then it was the same I-40 to Pulaski, AR then I-30 toward Dallas, TX. In Pulaski, I worked a mobile on 14336. James, KZ2P, was so happy to hear me he couldn't control himself,. What else could it be? I guess he was trying to say 'greetings' as I worked the mobile...but it came out GRRRR on top of the signal report. Didn't bother anyone other than show his incivility. Just couldn't get the rest of 'greetings' out. Hi HI This mid morning so the meds must be slowing down by then. Later he seemed to have things more under control. Hey, if he didn't do silly things, I wouldn't have stuff to put in the newsletter.

Lowell and Sandra were out in WI and would reach IA later in the day. W5IL was finishing up running all of MD and went QRT in Garrett MD before he heads back home.

It was just trekking over the same roads.....75 mph all through AR (70 speed limit and traffic moving 75 mph). Folks were driving 'friendly' for the most part. When you hit TX, the speed limit moves up to 75 mph.....all the way to Dallas County....and folks were running 80-82 in the fast lane all the way home. That makes the miles go by, but there are lots of them and after 3 days, they all begin to look alike!

Well, I was home at 2pm. It was 70 degrees outside, which sure beats snow and 20s and 30s, but the cold weather is headed this way for the weekend once again. It's December already! You can appreciate the warmer winters.

Heard a few old calls in there this trip. K0ERE.....W4HSAK6OHM...and some others not heard that often these days. It was a fun trip and I hit some 'off the interstate' ones for the folks I didn't need to run a single county up and back..... I need to finish something so there's a reason to put them out all again!.....

Loads of calls made it in the log. From W9GUY, WA4EEZ, W3DY, AD1C, AD1B, K7INA, KW1DX, W8FNW, K7VAY, K1TKL, AB7NK, K7SEN, NM2L, KC1NA, KE3VV, W3DLM, N4AAT, N1API, W4YDY, K4YT, K2MF, W5IL, AC4VR, WB4KZW, W4HSA, AB7RW, K4EXT, W7PFV, K4PBX, N7JPF, KM6HB, WD6CKT, G3XVR, DL3IAC, WA9DLB, N4RS, KC3X, NT2A, WA2CNJ, N2JJ, W4SIG, NW6S, N5UZW, N5MLP, KK5NA, K5OH, K5TIA, K5TER, N0KV, KB0BA, N0XYL, K4XI, YV5OIE, WQ7A, KA7ICF, N4JT, KB6UF, K7REL, SM7DZI, DL6KVA, DL3IAC, KA4RRU, W0EAR, K4AMC, W0GXQ, DL5ME, K7ZYZ, OK1CF, OK1KT, VE4EA, W0SK, W0AV, N9CJH, WA4RNN, K7TM, W9WOC, N8II, W5PKE, W9ZJX, KA4RRU, WA2GVI, WG9A, WA9LKF, WA3QNT, K2HVN, K0TVY, K5KDG, N8MD, AA9JJ/N9QPQ, LY5A, AB7CB, N9QS, N9STL, K0DEQ, K07X, NF0N, N8CIJ, K0TVY, KB0WD, WA0ILV, KB9OWD, KY9KYA, W9UX, AE3Z, ON4AAC, KY0E, W0NAC, K5VYT..and the list goes on and on.

Hope you caught some new ones! More travel coming up but who knows to where? Maybe Houston in Feb? And other trips in Jan? You never know where N4CD will show up.

On Monday after the trip, I hit the gym for the first time in 12 days. Looks like all that good eating, all those nice waffles, added 2.5 lbs extra according to the digital scale at the gym. Ugggh!.....now to lose a few pounds before the next set of holidays but I won't be pigging out so much this month. Hmm...like they say, 'you indulge, you bulge'.....no waffles for a month! Hi hi

Just a bit over 2900 miles for the round trip – with six days on the road.

Some Things from Ebay

Here is something you don't see for sale on Ebay every day. It's an "ABC" dial telegraph used by the French military and post office in the 1850s-1900 era. It used two wires to send pulses to step the indicator to the correct letter/number. You read off the letter/number after the dial ratcheted around and stopped. Then you would hit the top button to reset it for the next letter. It didn't take a 'trained' operator to use. It was slow since you had to send pulses to step the mechanism letter by letter to the right one.



ABC Telegraph Unit - French

The seller was asking a big price – over \$2000. I didn't see it sell.

160 Meter Contest

A few of the county hunters show up for the annual ARRL 160 meter contest. The first night I didn't even have power until late in the evening so no plans were made. This year I was QRT with an ice storm here coating everything with ice and no desire to stick up the temporary inverted L used in the past. That would have been near impossible on the solid ice on everything. Some of the other regulars were on and hundreds participated – some for a few hours, some in full contest mode. Here's a few reports:

From the 3830 contest reflector:

NM2L – GA - 266 QSO 64 ARRL sections

“A good time with lots of sleep as well. It became obvious to me that I need to work on my receive capabilities, but all considered I was pretty satisfied with the score. I'll be back next year.”

W0BH – KS 408 QSO 72 ARRL Sections

Missed and didn't hear LAX RI NLI AK PAC PR VI NT SK MB NL. No DX heard or worked, but I mostly called CQ so didn't search too hard. Conditions were tough with some really faint signals. We also had very light freezing drizzle coming down at times, but not enough to cause problems this time.

K4BAI - 325 Q 57 Sections

Time very limited. Weekend full of other obligations including a tennis tournament.

N2CU - WNY 1103 QSO 80 sections

Friday night was quiet, but Saturday very noisy. Looks like the auroral oval dipped down far enough to make things less than optimum. Missed AK, PR and NT.

KS5A – AZ 105 Q 47 Mults

KN4Y – 190 Q 42 Sections

Stayed up past midnight to log a CA stations and it did not happen. To make it a negative clean sweep I did not work a DX. The band is indescribable. I bandage my score and prepare for ten meters.

On the Trail Of Regens

PILOT WASP RADIO

Here's another goodie that went by on Ebay in November. I would have loved to have 'won' it but it got up to ridiculous prices. There's one collector out to buy every old radio on Ebay. Maybe another will come along, but these usually only come out of 'silent key' collections and museum sell offs of surplus or going out of business sales.

This is a Pilot Wasp short wave regenerative receiver – the 'baby brother' WASP. It was a 3 tube set from the late 1920s Pilot manufactured quite a few broadcast sets.

From the Western Wireless Museum Site:

Though Pilot's advertising claimed they had been in business since 1908 and the company had used several different names during that time, "Pilot Electric Manufacturing Company" was officially founded in 1922 by Isidor Goldberg in Brooklyn, New York. Pilot Electric Manufacturing Company also claimed to be "The World's Largest Radio Parts Plant" in the twenties and they did build all of the parts supplied with their kits. Some of the famous employees of Pilot were Robert Kruse, Alfred Ghirardi and John Geloso. David Grimes was a Contributing Editor for "Radio Design" - Pilot's magazine. Though not the first Shortwave receiver kit offered by Pilot, the three-tube "Wasp" was certainly their first really popular Shortwave receiver kit. In 1928 the selling price was \$21.75 including the coils. The "Wasp" was designed by Robert Kruse and Milton B. Sleeper. The plug-in coils selected the tuning ranges that covered 500 meters to 17 meters or about 600kc up to 17.6mc. A complete coil set featured five coils each with color-coded handles for identification. The three tubes were usually 201-A and the circuit used a regenerative detector followed by two stages of transformer coupled AF amplification. The kit included detailed instructions along with an assembly drawing. Builders were warned to adhere to the wiring layout shown on the drawing or performance would suffer. The circuit was built on a bakelite board for the chassis and a mahogany colored bakelite panel. The "Wasp" was introduced just as Shortwave Broadcasting was beginning to grow and everyone wanted to tune in to stations located in foreign countries.

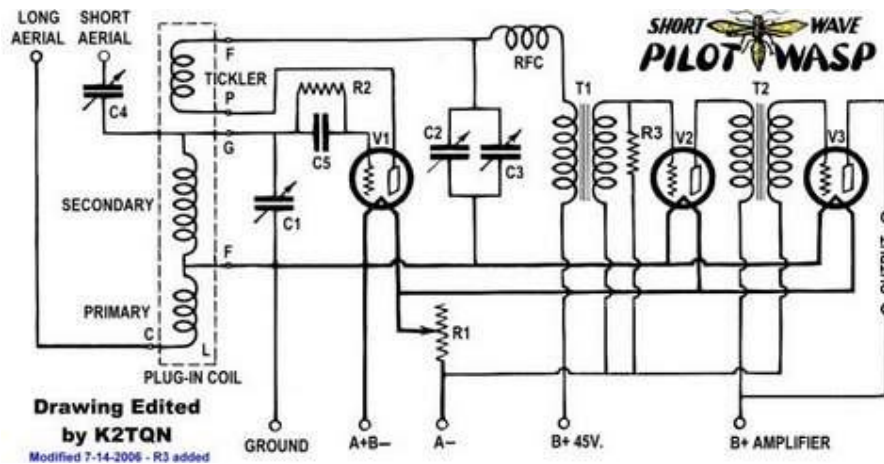
The "Wasp" was very popular and soon spawned a newer, more sophisticated successor, the "Super-Wasp."



Pilot Wasp Regen Radio Model K-101 Kit



Pilot Wasp Top view



Pilot Wasp Schematic

This radio sold for well over \$430! Ouch! Plus another \$45 for shipping. In 1929 you could buy the kit for \$21.75 (which was a lot of money back then).

The 'boards' used to make it were made out of Micarta – which was, according to Wiki

“Micarta is a brand name for composites of linen, canvas, paper, fiberglass, carbon fiber or other fabric in a thermosetting plastic. It was originally used in electrical and decorative applications. Micarta was developed by George Westinghouse at least as early as 1910 using phenolic resins invented by Leo Baekeland. These resins were used to impregnate paper and cotton fabric which were cured under pressure and high temperature to produce laminates. In later years this manufacturing method included the use of fiberglass fabric and other resin types were also used. Today Micarta high pressure industrial laminates are produced with a wide variety of resins and fibers. The term has been used generically for most resin impregnated fibre compounds. Common uses of modern high pressure laminates are as electrical insulators, printed circuit board substrates, and knife handles. “

<http://www.radioblvd.com/Pre-WWII%20Ham%20Gear.htm>

Here's a nice page on the Pilot Wasp Radio with more pics, descriptions, articles – by K2TQN

<http://www.eht.com/oldradio/arrl/2006-08/pilot-wasp.htm>

N1TEV Regen

One other radio, one made from the Circuit Board from FAR Radio, and a home made chassis, appeared on Ebay this month. It's a simple 2N2222 regen detector and LM386 audio amp IC in about as simple a circuit as you can get. Designed by N1TEV, who has written dozens of articles on regen receivers.



N1TEV regen design circa 1990

You have a main tune and fine tune (bandset and bandspread caps), a regen pot and audio pot. About as simple as you want and you can order the board from FAR if you want to build one yourself (or buy one of the several kits out there that contain all the parts). Sold for \$49 plus \$11 shipping.

Here's a close up view of the board and parts – found using Google

<http://tinyurl.com/nnejr37>

Here's the whole article from QST, September 2000 on how to build it!

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Technology/tis/info/pdf/0009061.pdf>

Ain't the web great? It's amazing what you can track down these days.

County Sign Database Project

Gary, K4EXT, has been busy adding in new pictures. The database contains over 2100 pictures and it's been a big project for him that never seems to end. However, the end is in sight as folks add in 10-20 counties a month. Before long it will be over 3000 and the challenge will be on to find the county line signs in MA (hard to find) or 'county signs' that work, as well as NJ and a few other places that are hard to find signs (NY City area). With some determination and a bit of ingenuity, we'll get there.

New additions were received from Bob, N8KIE in MI, , W5QP in AR and MS, N9STL on her trip back east to IN, OH, PA, NJ, K5GE in TX and La, and from Lowell, KB0BA (along with N0XYL on their trips Here's Chisago MN



KB0BA/N0XYL at Chisago, MN

Here's a real oldie courtesy of the K9DCJ files. These were passed on to the MARAC historian by the wife of K9DCJ (SK). This is KT4U at the county line of Greene/Orange, VA. Anyone want to guess the year?



KT4U at Greene/Orange, VA

Others sent in pics from current or previous trips.



VE2MAM Newton/Wabash, IN



N9STL – Elk, PA

Rick, W5QP, added in a few more to AR. That state is now finished with 75 of the 75 counties in the database! finished! Here's his mobile at the county line. (a nice “Percy Pic”)



W5QP, White AR

Many folks find it nice to take pics of 'last counties' for the special trips to get them, and of course, many others simply like documenting their journeys with “Percy Pics” so the blabber mouth in FL won't be accusing you of running counties from your driveway as he has to many in the past. With the new digital cameras for \$50 and up, and almost all smart phones now containing excellent cameras, you can snap all the pictures you want for pennies apiece.

Gene, K5GE, has been out on a few trips in TX lately with W5PKE. Here's a picture he snapped at Allen Parish, LA



K5GE mobile – Allen Parish, LA

Here's one from the 'wayback machine'. It's a 1991 picture of KA2CNG, John, at the County Line of his home county – Broome, NY



KA2CNG – USACA #551 – 1991 – Broome NY

A special tribute this month to W7GHT, USA-CA #185 (1978), USA-CW #18, who recently became a silent key. Here's his picture at the County Line of Columbia, WA in 1977 now on the County Sign Database Page. Picture was contributed by Lorraine, XYL of K9DCJ (SK) who sent a large number of photos to the MARAC historian.



Bill, W7GHT, Spokane Hamfest 1997



Bill, W7GHT (SK) Columbia, WA

A History Lesson for the “Warmists”

Guest essay by Robert W. Endlich

Sea levels are rising rapidly! Coastal communities are becoming more vulnerable to storms and storm surges! Small island nations are going to disappear beneath the waves!

Climate alarmists have been making these claims for years, trying to tie them to events like “Superstorm” Sandy, which was below Category 1 hurricane strength when it struck New York City in October 2012, and Typhoon Haiyan, which plowed into the low-lying central Philippines in November 2013.

For alarmists, it does not seem to matter that the strength and frequency of tropical storms have been decreasing in recent years, while the rate of sea level rise has fallen to about seven inches

per century. Nor does it seem to matter that the lost lives and property have little to do with the storms' sheer power. Their destructive impact was caused by their hitting heavily populated areas, where governments had not adequately informed citizens of the size and ferocity of imminent storm surges, too few people had evacuated – and people, buildings and emergency equipment were insufficiently prepared to withstand the furious storm onslaughts.

The alarmist cries are not meant to be honest or factual. They are intended to generate hysterical headlines, public anxiety about climate change, and demands for changes in energy policies and use.

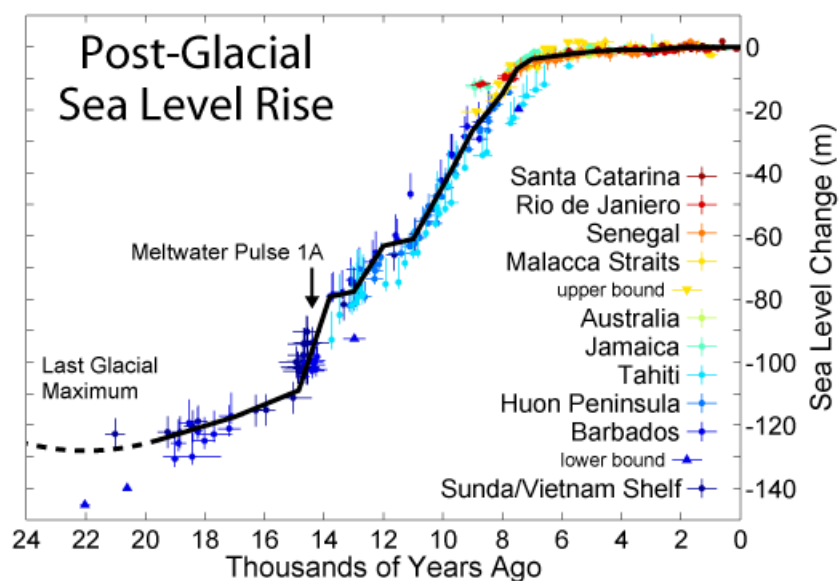
China is rapidly becoming one of the richest nations on Earth. It is by far the largest single emitter of carbon dioxide, which alarmists claim is causing “unprecedented” storms and sea level rise. And yet at the recent UN-sponsored climate talks in Warsaw, China led a walkout of 132 Third World countries that claim First World nations owe them hundreds of billions of dollars in “reparations” for “losses and damages” allegedly resulting from CO2 emissions.

The Obama Administration brought (perhaps “bought” is more apt) them back to the negotiating table, by promising as-yet-unspecified US taxpayer money for those supposed losses. Details for this unprecedented giveaway will be hammered out at the 2015 UN-sponsored climate confab in Paris, safely after the 2014 US mid-term elections. Meanwhile, a little history will be instructive.

In 2008, presidential candidate Barack Obama proclaimed, “This was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow.” He was actually right. Sea level rise has slowed, but not because of CO2 emissions, which are still increasing. Mother Nature cannot be bought.

Sea level changes over relatively recent geologic and human history demonstrate that alarmist claims do not withstand scrutiny. Sea levels rose significantly after the last ice age, fell during the Little Ice Age, and have been rising again since the LIA ended around 1850. In fact, Roman Empire and Medieval port cities are now miles from the Mediterranean, because sea levels actually fell during the Little Ice Age.

During the deepest part of the last ice age, known as the Wisconsin, sea levels were about 400 feet lower than at present. As Earth emerged from the Wisconsin some 18,000 years ago and the massive ice sheets started to melt, sea levels began rising. Rapid sea level rise during the “meltwater pulse phase,” about 15,000 years ago, was roughly five meters (16 feet) per century – but then slowed significantly since the Holocene Climate Optimum, about 8,000 years ago.



Those rising oceans created new ports for Greek and Roman naval and trade vessels. But today many of those structures and ruins are inland, out in the open, making them popular tourist destinations. How did that happen? The Little Ice Age once again turned substantial ocean water into ice, lowering sea levels, and leaving former ports stranded. Not enough ice has melted since 1850 to make them harbors again.

The ancient city of Ephesus was an important port city and commercial hub from the Bronze Age to the Minoan Warm period, and continuing through the Roman Empire. An historic map shows its location right on the sea. But today, in modern-day Turkey, Ephesus is 5 km from the Mediterranean. Some historians erroneously claim “river silting” caused the change, but the real “culprit” was sea level change.

Ruins of the old Roman port Ostia Antica, are extremely well preserved – with intact frescoes, maps and plans. Maps from the time show the port located at the mouth of the Tiber River, where it emptied into the Tyrrhenian Sea. The Battle of Ostia in 849, depicted in a painting attributed to Raphael, shows sea level high enough for warships to assemble at the mouth of the Tiber. However, today this modern-day tourist destination is two miles up-river from the mouth of the Tiber. Sea level was significantly higher in the Roman Warm Period than today.

An important turning point in British history occurred in 1066, when William the Conqueror defeated King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings. Less well-known is that, when William landed, he occupied an old Roman fort now known as Pevensey Castle, which at the time was located on a small island in a harbor on England’s south coast. A draw bridge connected it to the mainland. Pevensey is infamous because unfortunate prisoners were thrown into this “Sea Gate,” so that their bodies would be washed away by the tide. Pevensey Castle is now a mile

from the coast – further proof of a much higher sea level fewer than 1000 years ago.

Before modern Italy, the region was dominated by the famous City States of the Mediterranean, among which is Pisa, with its picturesque Cathedral Square and famous Leaning Tower. Located near the mouth of the Arno River, Pisa was a powerful city, because maritime trade brought goods from sailing ships right into the port. Its reign ended after 1300 AD, the onset of the Little Ice Age, when sea levels fell and ships could no longer sail to her port. Once again, some say “river silting” was the cause.

However, Pisa is now seven miles from the Tyrrhenian Sea, with large meanders upstream from Pisa and little meandering downstream. When a river is “at grade,” the downstream gradient is as low as possible, as with the meandering Mississippi River and delta in Louisiana. Rivers with a strong downstream gradient flow to the sea in a direct route, with few meanders, as with the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

The facts of history are clear. Sea level was 400 feet lower at the end of the Wisconsin Ice Age, 18,000 years ago. Sea levels rose rapidly until 8,000 years ago. As recently as 1066, when the Normans conquered England, sea levels were quite a bit higher than today.

During the Little Ice Age, 1300 to 1850 – when temperatures were the coldest during any time in the past 10,000 years – snow and ice accumulated in Greenland, Antarctica, Europe and glaciers worldwide. As a consequence, sea levels fell so much that important Roman Era and Medieval port cities (like Ephesus, Ostia Antica and Pisa) were left miles from the Mediterranean.

Since the Little Ice Age ended about 160 years ago, tide gauges show that sea level has risen at a steady rate – with no correlation to the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

Sea level is a dynamic property in our planet’s climate cycles, which are closely linked to changes in solar energy output and other natural factors. It is unlikely to change in response to tax policies that make energy more expensive and economies less robust – no matter what politicians in Washington, Brussels or the United Nations might say.

Much to their chagrin, Mother Nature doesn’t listen to them. She has a mind of her own.

Solar Activity Weakest in Century

Sun's Current Solar Activity Cycle Is Weakest in a Century

he sun's current space-weather cycle is the most anemic in 100 years, scientists say.

Our star is now at "solar maximum," the peak phase of its 11-year activity cycle. But this solar max is weak, and the overall current cycle, known as Solar Cycle 24, conjures up comparisons to the famously feeble Solar Cycle 14 in the early 1900s, researchers said.

"None of us alive have ever seen such a weak cycle. So we will learn something," Leif Svalgaard of Stanford University told reporters here today (Dec. 11) at the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union. [Solar Max: Amazing Sun Storm Photos of 2013]

The learning has already begun. For example, scientists think they know why the solar storms that have erupted during Solar Cycle 24 have caused relatively few problems here on Earth.

The sun often blasts huge clouds of superheated particles into space, in explosions known as coronal mass ejections (CMEs). Powerful CMEs that hit Earth squarely can trigger geomagnetic storms, which in turn can disrupt radio communications, GPS signals and power grids.

But such effects have rarely been seen during Solar Cycle 24, even though the total number of CMEs hasn't dropped off much, if at all. The explanation, researchers said, lies in the reduced pressure currently present in the heliosphere, the enormous bubble of charged particles and magnetic fields that the sun puffs out around itself.

This lower pressure has allowed CMEs to expand greatly as they cruise through space, said Nat Gopalswamy of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. Indeed, Solar Cycle 24 CMEs are, on average, 38 percent bigger than those measured during the last cycle — a difference with real consequences for folks here on Earth.

"When the CMEs expand more, the magnetic field inside the CMEs has lower strength," Gopalswamy said. "So when you have lower-strength magnetic fields, then they cause milder geomagnetic storms."

Scientists also think they know why relatively few super-fast solar energetic particles, or SEPS, have been measured in Earth's neighborhood during the current cycle, which began in early 2008. It has to do with a weakened interplanetary magnetic field, another characteristic of

Solar Cycle 24, they say.

Large SEP events, which can pose a danger to astronauts in Earth orbit, are created by the shock waves driven by CMEs. But fewer of these particles are getting accelerated by such shocks these days, said Joe Giacalone of the University of Arizona.

"When the magnetic field is weaker, the particles are not trapped near the shock as effectively," Giacalone said. "They're going much farther upstream and downstream of the shock wave, and it takes a lot longer for them to get to very high energies."

The strength or weakness of a solar cycle appears to be driven by the intensity of the sun's polar magnetic field during the previous cycle. The polar field is thought to feed the sunspots— dark and relatively cool patches on the sun that are the source of CMEs and solar flares — that come in during the next cycle, Gopalswamy said.

The polar field was weak during Solar Cycle 23, so researchers suspected that Solar Cycle 24 would be underwhelming. Predictions about Solar Cycle 25 should start coming in two or three years, when the polar field reappears, Svalgaard said.

Source: <http://www.space.com/23934-weak-solar-cycle-space-weather.html>

Links to State Maps

A tip of the hat to Joyce, N9STL, who gave us the following link to get free individual state maps.

“Though many people these days have a GPS, having a paper map does come in handy. Things get broken, stolen, signals get lost and well, some folks like me just happen to like maps. Many state websites have pages where you can request a paper map be sent to you. Remember to give yourself a little lead time. It may take a week or two to get your packet.”

<http://www.fuzzygalore.com/2011/01/links-to-free-state>

You can usually pick up nice state maps at 'visitor centers' when you enter a state on a main

highway. That's not an option on many smaller routes, though.

Quite a few county hunters use the services of the American Automobile Association (AAA) where you can request free maps and travel guides. They typically have regional offices where you can stop by. I think they'll mail you the information as well. Their maps are pretty decent for the most part. (Heads up – you need 4 or 5 AAA maps to cover California!).

In states like NJ, MA, and CT, where the states are more concerned with 'townships' than counties, it may be a challenge to even find 'county line signs' so good maps are essential – or having a GPS with county line overlay or computer running Street Atlas or equivalent. On toll roads there are often no county signs (OK, NY, NJ) so if you have no GPS, you need to do some advance planning to determine at what mile marker the county starts and ends, or at what river/bridge – for wet lines.

Some other comments from the K3IMC forum:

W4SIG: “State Farm has large USA road map books for free. They have the county lines marked. I pick up a new one from any State Farm office every 6 months or so as I wear them out with markings and tears!”

WY0A: “Delorme Atlas and Gazetter - I used this for the Kansas QSO Party and found it to be very helpful.. I matched it up with my Basecamp program that I use to plot my routes for my Garmin.. The Delorme website has sales quite often that will allow you to buy individual state Atlas and Gazetters for about half off and usually a third off on their boxed sets which cover regions of the U.S.”

WG6X:”I used state maps & state Altas. I picked up the state maps at Welcome Stations and bought the muti-paged State Atlas at truck stops “

K2HVN: “AAA maps. - This is what I use. If i need a map while traveling I use my cell which has internet and find the nearest AAA store. I also use a yellow marker to draw on a map my direction of travel to get the best roads to include the most counties. I also use their camping books.

W0GXQ:”If I don't have the official state maps handy, I use the spiral bound Rand McNally Road Atlas large print. Get a new one from Wal-Mart every few years (\$10). The large print/large scale are more. Some state maps do not mark their lines as well as others. Once I have my trip mapped out, I generate the route using Street Atlas and take my notebook or "acer" with me. The Atlas is carried as a backup.

If you use paper maps only, your trip itinerary should be annotated with the route changes for fast reference . . easier and safer than trying to read the maps.”

Happy traveling.

Magnetic Tape to the Rescue

Information storage: A 60-year-old technology offers a solution to a modern problem—how to store all those bits and bytes cheaply and reliably

The need for mass storage is reviving a technology which, only a few years ago, seemed destined for the scrapheap: magnetic tape.

Tape is the oldest computer storage medium still in use. It was first put to work on a UNIVAC computer in 1951. But although tape sales have been falling since 2008 and dropped by 14% in 2012, according to the Santa Clara Consulting Group, tape's decline has now gone into reverse: sales grew by 1% in the last quarter of 2012 and a 3% rise is expected this year.

Alberto Pace, head of data and storage at CERN, says that tape has four advantages over hard disks for the long-term preservation of data. The first is speed. Although it takes about 40 seconds for an archive robot to select the right tape and put it in a reader, once it has loaded, extracting data from that tape is about four times as fast as reading from a hard disk.

The second advantage is reliability. When a tape snaps, it can be spliced back together. The loss is rarely more than a few hundred megabytes—a bagatelle in information-technology circles. When a terabyte hard disk fails, by contrast, all the data on it may be lost. The consequence at CERN, specifically, is that a few hundred megabytes of its 100-petabyte tape repository are, on average, lost every year. Of the 50 petabytes of data held on hard disk, however, it loses a few hundred terabytes in the same period.

The third benefit of tapes is that they do not need power to preserve data held on them. Stopping a disk rotating by temporarily turning off the juice—a process called power cycling—

increases the likelihood that it will fail. The fourth benefit is security. If a hacker with a grudge managed to break into CERN's data centre, he could delete all 50 petabytes of the disk-based data in minutes. To delete the same amount from the organisation's tapes would take years.

Tape has two other benefits, as Evangelos Eleftheriou, manager of storage technologies at IBM's research laboratory in Zurich, points out. It is cheaper than disks (a gigabyte of disk storage costs 10 cents, versus 4 cents for tape), and it lasts longer. Tapes can still be read reliably after three decades, against five years for disks.

But even today's tape cartridges, which can hold up to six terabytes of compressed data, are not up to the job of dealing with the data deluge that is around the corner. Much higher densities than that are needed. In 2010 Dr Eleftheriou and his team, in collaboration with Fujifilm, set a new record. They demonstrated a tape that can store 29.5 gigabits per square inch—which, for a standard 1km tape, translates as 35 terabytes of data on a single cartridge. But even that is not enough for Dr Eleftheriou. He has now set himself the challenge of developing a tape with a density of 100 gigabits per square inch, and creating the equipment necessary to read it. If he is successful, a single cartridge will be able to store more than 100 terabytes.

Source: Economist Magazine

ARRL 10 Meter Contest

This was the year to be on 10M! This was the year to be in the 10M contest on the first day of the two day event! Yes, we had sunspots. Yes, we had propagation.

Things started out nicely in TX with the Europeans pounding in on my vertical antenna on Sunday morning. Well, the loud EU stations. Didn't hear the weaker ones that the east coast was working by the hundreds. The New England stations could also be worked and I must have worked a couple dozen in MA which seemed to have the most on the air along with CT. Not much out of ME, just a handful out of VT, and naturally, tons out of NH – mostly in the same county – Rockingham, too. Hi hi. I still need one county each in VT and ME and didn't snag it. Never checked SSB on Saturday but I suspect it was wall to wall. On Saturday, cw stations were all the way up to 28180! Below 080, you better have a good crystal filter or digital filter to contend with the QRM and stations spaced a couple hundred Hz apart. Fun!

Later in the day, the west coast came pounding in – well, the same WA stations for the most part, then later some CA stations. In the background there were probably 25 states coming in on backscatter – from AR, CO, SD, LA, TN, - from 500 to 1000 miles away. Some could be

worked like K0DEQ in MO and others never seemed to hear me calling with my barefoot rig. Power does help!

Saturday afternoon/evening brought in the JA's. I tried not too hard to work too many of them since they seem to QSL 100% and I didn't need any more JA QSL cards. There were a couple of HI stations in there for the taking, and one in 3rd AK that I heard. Others reported many AK stations in there.

I heard many of the county hunters on – from N8II, N5XG, K0DEQ, to OK1CF. Likely dozens were in there but we just didn't have state side propagation to each other. Never heard KN4Y. The skip was 1300 miles plus, with a few big contest type stations worked on backscatter.

On Sunday, the A index was up at 17....the band was real flakey but lively. The EU DX was a lot weaker. There were few US stations from New England, so I surfed up the band starting at the bottom working the EU stations coming through until I heard stateside stations. There are no counties in EU. When life hands you lemons, make lemonade. By then, the EU stations were giving out contact numbers over 1500 so it was easy to get through on just a few calls. I'd rather try to work some new counties – but the band was not great on Sunday as it was on Saturday -but I still snagged another hundred or two. Still, the DX stations were finding lots of folks to work – some over 2000 contacts made by Sunday morning and over 3000 by afternoon.

From K3IMC forum:

KN4Y: Friday night was a drill in frustrating patience, very little activity here. Saturday got up at 5:30am and decided to go to the shack. Turned on the heater, got dressed and called CQ. At 7:00am all heck broke loose, CW signals from everywhere, I quit calling and did the Search and pouch routine. Wall to wall CW signals until 8:00pm. It was fun working the JA's, better get a envelope to the QSL bureau. Band went to sleep and later I followed. Arose again at 5:30am and again at 7:00am CW signals from all over the place. It was fun all day. I quite at 350 QSO's, will have to take my shoes off to count higher. More data in Dateline CW. The ten meter gods like a CW contest.

N1API: “It was a BIG WEEKEND on 10 meters!

I had a total of 584 Q's, 376 on CW with 123 Multis, 208 on phone with 79 multis and did the search and pounce thingy all weekend. Saturday was the best but the first day usually is. The bands were not as good Sunday as Saturday, BUT there was some GREAT backscatter into MD, DE and DC. Even one of the MD guys told me that NE was roaring in. I didn't do WAS in a weekend end but didn't need to. I missed a few even ME in New England but worked a lot of

MA, NH, VT, NY and NJ. On CW I was getting the double TU from some which usually means I was a needed multi and on phone was getting a lot of "thanks for the new one" from the backscatter and NE states.

Sunday afternoon 10 meters seemed to go el-stinko after Europe went away so it was a good afternoon to bang away US contacts. One thing I noticed too, there were more Alaskan stations on in this contest then I've heard in a long time.

I put it all up on LBOTW and got almost 200 hits from US and DX stations for the weekend already. Checked the details and I see new Counties for band, mode and 4th time. One thing which pleased me is that one of the DE stations that I worked on CW put the contact up on Logbook and gave me my final contact for the Triple Play Award. DE was the last that I needed for both Digital and CW and I got the Digital from a DE station that I worked in the WAE RTTY contest so I was ripe to get this done. “

K8QWY: “Great contest had a small beam this year and it really help.. Worked 43 States 1 Dx Missed ar ok ks mo ms ri nd Only heard a few from Texas and not many Flordia but most of the other areas were great.. Got a Big Signal KS5A from AZ... Looks like 79 New Counties 10 CW an only called 1 CQ the rest was all the S & P “

From the 3830 contest reflector.

N2CU - NY - 938 cw qso - Nice band conditions to Europe, not so much to the rest of the world. Had fun operating off and on during both days.

W0BH – KS – 301 cw 634 SSB - that was a a great way play this weekend!

K4BAI – GA _ 859 cw 381 SSB - Nice to have good conditions for DX. Probably best DX worked was 9M6XRO, a new band/mode country on SSB. Hope this second "peak" of sunspots will last a long time.

KS5A – NM – 500 cw

N4PN GA - 1187 cw 1026 SSB - This was truly as good as it gets...what great condx.. Lots of great things happened and lots of surprises..

Score suffered a bit, as I set my goal to at least have 1000 Q's on each mode...

The group down South (XE's) sure added a lot of mults..

Hard to get a handle on a station here in town counting as many points as a BY or JA...

Thanks to ARRL...this is really a keeper.
Also, great to work so many friends and make a few new ones..

K5YAA – OK - 734 CW

K5IID – TX – 539 cw

The ice storm last week got my quad... ALL of it except 10 meters. The 10 meter elements are in in tact BUT there are wires hanging down that are catching in trees and I can only rotate from 300 degrees through north to 30 degrees. So I was really limited in that way. BUT what a blast. One of the best parts was working all the close in calls. I worked all over TX, LA, OK, KS, AR. NM etc. Great fun working stations that have absolutely no signal strength but just can hear the signal barely! Almost ESP! In fact some of the DX Qs were that way too!

KL7RA – AK 1829 cw

Serious effort trying for 2000 Q's and bust one million but not to be. Lost some big hours when the antennas shut down due to ice and I was down to 50 watts for most of Friday. Big disappointment was missing Europe. They did come up out of the noise, actually to very nice no aurora signals but I couldn't pounce fast enough and the lower 48 came up at the same time sucking bandwidth. Just not enough in the log this year. If I could have run at least 20 mins of rate to Europe then a million score would have been in the bag.

Trying to control the packet clickers, all calling on the same exact freq took some effort. Always someone was calling over and over ignoring anything I was doing. Lots of ESP signals after every CQ and trying to get their call took multiple tries but it was possible to get some in the log as they pop up for a few seconds.

Contest ended and I was up and outside snowblowing the road after a major blizzard Friday closed it in.

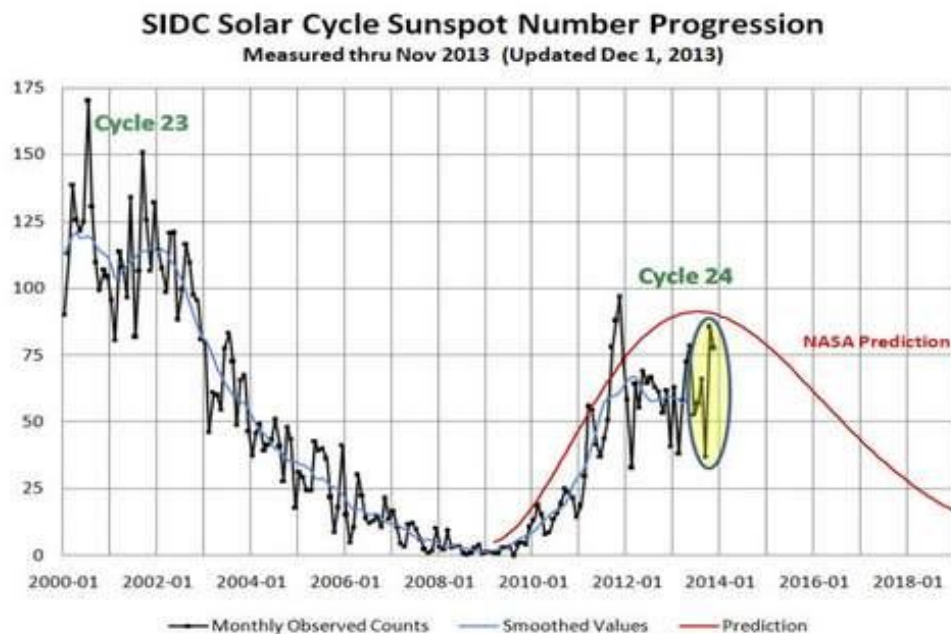
K1BV – CT - QRP - 821 CW QSO

NM2L – GA - 320 cw - A real fun time. I just wish I had more time to operate. FT-1000 to

160 Inverted L and an 80 meter loop in the trees.

Sunspot News II

The monthly International Sunspot Number from the Solar Information Data Center (SIDC) of the Royal Observatory of Belgium was released December 1st. It fell to 77.6 spots/day.



Most newsworthy is that this is still the weakest solar max in over 200 years, well below NASA's forecast.

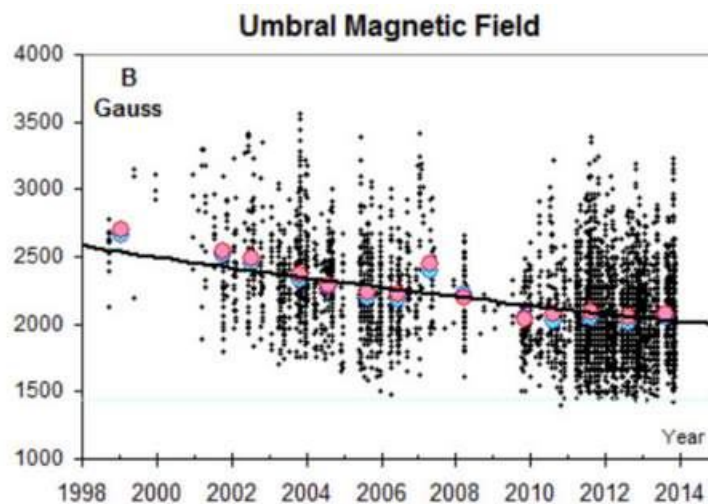
Equally important for Earth's future climate is an emerging pattern in overall sunspot magnetic field strength. Its decline is no longer linear!

Strangely, practically all the sunspot activity last month was in the sun's southern hemisphere. It accounted for 61.2 of the total. That's its highest activity level of Cycle 24.

On the other hand, the northern hemisphere only managed a paltry 16.4. That's its lowest count since before solar max three years ago. Northern sunspot activity is pretty much done.

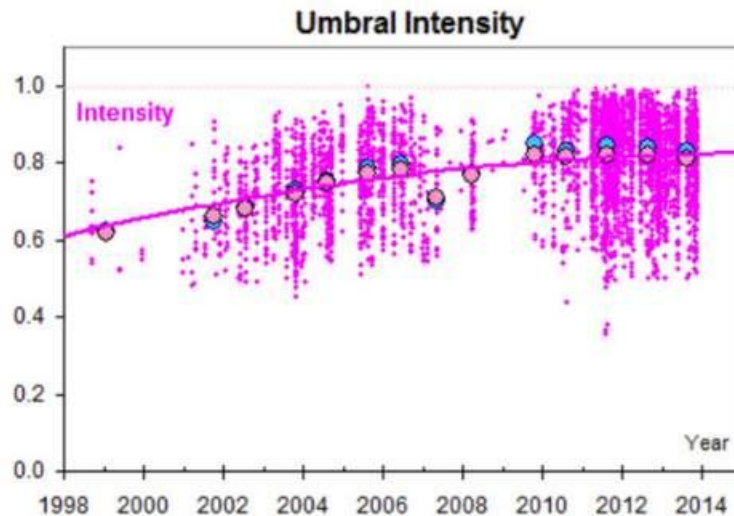
Sunspot activity in November backed off from October's incredible burst to 85.6. Activity peaked mid-month with 5 strait active days where spot counts rose to over 100. By month's end, though, it backed off to the mid-60s. Northern spots were down to just 8 by month's end.

We may be witnessing the sun's last dying gasps before entering into a long slumber. The impact of that slumber on Earth's climate remains the subject of growing scientific speculation.



It's been known for years that sunspot umbral magnetic field strength has been declining while their intensity has been rising, thanks to researchers Matt Penn and Bill Livingston at the National Solar Observatory.

The changes are independent of the 11-year sunspot cycle.



A steady decline in umbral magnetic field strength is the most dramatic evidence that sunspots are fading away. Should their field strength drop below 1,500 gauss it becomes physically impossible for sunspots to form and they will disappear.

Less sunspot activity reduces the sun's radiant energy output and cools Earth.

Shown in the latest measurements above, a transformation has appeared as more data has been gathered and refined.

When magnetic field strength weakening was first discovered it was a steep linear decline that appeared would dip below 1,500 gauss before 2025.

But now, the decline has flattened and become more concave. It looks as if it may level off close to, but above the magic 1,500 gauss level. At the same time it looks like umbral intensity is curving back the other way to.

Conclusions

Several trends in sunspot activity for this cycle are becoming clear.

First, northern sunspot activity is near its end while southern activity is at its zenith. The only drama left is when will southern spot polarity reversal occur. That is expected any time. The sun right now is a magnetic monopole. The sun will finish its inexorable journey to sunspot minimum after southern sunspot polarity reversal occurs.

The decline in sunspot magnetic field strength is continuing, but showing signs of leveling off

along a shallow concave curve. Umbral intensity is showing a similar change in the reverse.

Sunspots may not disappear completely, but they will be so weak that a long term decrease in solar wind and a slight but prolonged decrease in the sun's temperature will result.

The latest solar data from this month reinforces the belief that our sun is headed into a long-term period of low solar activity.

As time goes on a link between decreasing solar activity and the halt in global warming 17 years ago becomes harder and harder to deny

Source: <http://informthepundits.wordpress.com/2013/12/14/november-2013-sunspots-trends/>

On the Road with N4CD II

The urge to go mobile hit. I'd been sitting at home since the return trip back to TX and most of the return trip, other than the detour to Monroe, WV, and one or two other quick side trips, was all interstate. Boring interstate – same counties I'd been in so many times before. Well, it's hard to find places close by that I haven't been in many times! Other than El Paso TX – which is a long, long way from my QTH as far away as you can get in TX, I've probably been in every county four or five times minimum. Folks still need TX counties and of course, we keep coming up with new awards so there are reasons to go visit the counties again – and again – and again. Other than state QSO parties, we don't have too many in-state county hunters roaming around these days. You can say that for lots of states, too!

Gary, K4EXT, needed a few more county signs for TX and I could pick up a few hopefully in east TX to fill out the database. He needed 22 more county signs to finish off all 254 in TX. I'll have to jump start a few county hunters – K5GE lives in Guadalupe, TX and that one is a 'missing one'! N5MLP lives in Harris, TX and that too is 'missing' along with Galveston where he just was a month ago. Hmmm.... We've got a resident CH or two around Travis TX, too. Of course, it took me a while to get Dallas and Denton TX (both within 8 miles) to find a place with a sign and where I could snap it. I could catch 3 of the missing ones on this trip.

The weather would cooperate for 2 days so it was off to east TX to run some 'in between the interstates' and a few south of the Interstate 20. From Dallas, if you head east to get anywhere, you'll likely take Interstate 30 which heads to Little Rock AR, hitting the corner of TX at

Bowie before going into AR. If you are headed directly east, you'll use I-20 which heads over to Shreveport, LA (Caddo/Bossier). In between are a line of counties that aren't run that often – sometimes only in the state QSO party or when someone is running the state of TX. The temps were above normal for 2 days and the rain would hold off for 3 days.

I packed the suitcase and car for an overnight trip. Didn't even bother to stop the mail or paper for less than 2 days away. I woke up early and hit the road at 6:30 am after a quick bowl of cereal and juice. The nearby convenience store had a good cup of regular coffee for a buck. It was a work-day – Thursday, so I'd have to either leave early or late to avoid rush hour. The timing was good and there wasn't any traffic to get to the G.W. Bush Turnpike headed east over to I-30. You pay a couple bucks in tolls, but in the morning, the last thing you want to do is head south down US 75 to the 'Beltway' and fight your way around it for 15 miles in stop and go traffic. No thanks. The tollroad bypasses all of that. It's probably only a few miles shorter but you zip along at 75 the whole way. This was a quick spur of the moment trip so I only planned the first day with the goal of stopping somewhere to where I could get back home before the next evening rush hour. The weather gods were planning on dumping 1-2-3 inches of rain on Collin County on Saturday and most of TX would be either 'wet' or 'ice' up in the panhandle.

The weather was nice – it was 65 degrees as I stuck the antenna on the trunk deck and headed out. For VK4AAR's enjoyment, I'll toss in a few route numbers so he can travel along vicariously with his TX map. He sold the house and big beam and there's been no signal out of VK land for quite a while now. There are about 8 traffic lights till I hit US-75. Then it's all 4 and 6 and 8 lanes until Rockwall where it is time to get off and head east between the interstates on route 276. Just two traffic lights there – then back to excellent highway headed east. I pass by Big Momma's Fireworks Store. It's all lit up with 7 American Flags flying on high masts above the store. You can't miss it! Next up is Hunt County and its over to Lake Tawakoni in Rains County. There was a nice pileup on cw there. Then it's on to smaller route 515 over to Winnsboro in Wood County – nice two lane road that moves along at 55 or 60 mph and gets you to where you can 'whack the corner' of two more counties with a short side trip. There's hardly any traffic lights for 100 miles. You could count them on the fingers on both hands with digits left over.

Nearly all the leaves were brown and were falling. Many of the oak trees still had their leaves and tried to keep them. As you head east/southeast, there are millions of pine trees mixed in for a while, then it turns mostly pine trees further southeast in the swamps of Sabine, San Augustine. There was 'no color' left for the leaf buffs. The ground was littered with fallen leaves.

In TX, the route numbers with two digits, like 69, are usually 4 lane roads, many divided, with limited access and few traffic lights. Many towns have bypasses. When you get to 3 digit road numbers, most are good roads – some have paved shoulders. Some not. If you get on 4 digit roads, they can be windy twisty roads with lower speed limits. I usually don't take to

many of the 4 digit roads unless it saves a bunch of miles or is the only way to get to the county from where I'm at.

The bands were in decent shape and there was no one 'occupying' 14336 so the county hunters had a lot of fun. Ray, AB4YZ, was in MO and KS and was the only other mobile out. Let's see – who showed up on SSB?

Here's most of the list for SSB: N0XYL, KC1NA, N9STL, KW1DX, K5WAF, WA9DLB, VE5EGK, N2OCW, WA2GVI, W3CR, N8CIJ, K4DI, W0EAR, LY5A, W1ATV, AB7NK, WA0LMK, K5VYT, N6PBD, WA3QNT, WA9OUE, N7JPF, N4AAT, K9MIX, K2HVN, WA9LKF, K4PLB, WG9A, K1TKL, N8II, N3RM, K4YT, NF0N, K6KLL, KC7D, W6TPC, AB4YZ, NG9L, WB0CQO, WA0RKQ, N5KGY, N9QS, K9EN, W4SIG, AA9JJ, N9QPQ, W0NAC, N0LXJ, K0TVY, K1ZN, W4YDY, N8OYY, K7TM, W0GXQ, NW6S, N8CIJ. There were a few passer-by types and no one got yelled at for using phonetics.

About 2/3rds of those listed above also are on cw but it is nice to hook up with the others from time to time. I did run off frequency twice on Friday but in many rural areas I had no coverage to try to spot myself and no one sticks around on cw after the runs.

After a short side trip up route 11, you hit Hopkins and Franklin, TX. N0XYL needed that for a next to last. We hooked up on 20M SSB on 14.336. Ran all the cw bands and 20m SSB. So far so good. Next was more east on route 11 thought Camp TX – another one not run that often. Head on out of camp on 557 over to Lone Star TX and you'll hit Uphur, TX. It's only a few miles north of I-20 but isn't run too often either. I was filling them all in between the interstates. That left Cass and Marion and you can run it nicely 49 just outside Avinger, TX. Nice quiet spot there. That filled in just about all the counties between the interstates - the first goal of the trip. Now it was time to head a bit south.

Well, it's a longer drive to Harrison then down to Panola via Rusk. Several needed Panola, including Jerry, W0GXQ, on 17m. He's down to just a few for the entire state of TX – wow. I had looked at the Mobile Diamond needs of Joyce, N9STL, and Hollis, KC3X. Joyce got me 8 of the last 8 I needed in GA on her way south, so I'd try to finish off TX for her. She's only on in FL with a small antenna so she missed a lot of MD counties run in the past. The probability of her getting a needed relay on net is near zero many days – hi h. Hollis, KC3X, was sidelined with rebuilding the QTH after the tornado wiped it out....and now he is catching up to the rest of the folks. Chuck, W3CR was also sidelined for over a year and now is back in there catching up. Jonas, LY5A, needs 'everything' again. ON4AAC was in there too working 'em. Conditions to EU were not great. Jonas had a giant 'echo' on this signal most of the day.

It was still early so I could head south and put out more, The weather was delightful – near 70 degrees - overcast – low cloud deck – but good visibility. Excellent county hunting weather, for sure, in December.

At the county lines, I rolled the windows down and enjoyed the breeze. Nice!

Rusk was on the 'needs list' so it was down 49 to whack the corner of Rusk, then down 149 into Panola. That adds a few miles, but folks had many needs for Rusk. There was still time, so it was further south to Shelby, another on the 'wanted list'.

I hit Shelby and wasn't paying attention. Too busy running the county and missed my route change. Stayed on Rt 59 when I should have turned onto 96. It was 15 miles later that I realized I wasn't going where I wanted to be! OOPS....well, that added about another 30 miles to the route and didn't get me any other county. Dang. I was setting the GPS for the next town along the route most of the trip, but got lazy. Well, that cost me 1/2 an hour of daylight. I'd been on the road for 9 hours about then. There was still daylight so back on the route and headed southeast now on 87 all the way down to the town of Marion in Sabine County. At this point it was about 3:30 and I had to make a decision to head further south to Newton/Jasper, likely winding up in Wood County for the night (Woodville) or head west to Nacogdoches. That 1/2 hour would have come in handy. This is the shortest daylight time of the year and with the cloud cover, it would be real dark real soon. I opted to head west. The roads through the forests get real dark real fast at sunset and the deer start playing then. I'd rather miss all that.

Going on Rt 21 gets you into San Augustine to Nacogdoches. Nacogdoches is a big town but there are only two types of motels there – high price and real dumps. I looked on the GPS – showed the Hiltons and Best Westerns and the Econo-Lodge and that was about it. No Motel 6. I got out my spotting pad(Samsung Tab) and looked for Motels – read the quick review of the Econo-Lodge - bed bugs, rude staff – nothing good to say about it but 'cheap' - hmmm – think I'll avoid that. Ah, a Super 8. Gave them a jingle and they had a room. They're right among the Hiltons and Best Western. Price was \$64 plus tax bringing it to \$72 for the night. It was 4:30 but it was too far to the next county to get there and back so I'd do that in the morning. Motels in southeast TX aren't cheap. I can stay at a Super 8 in my home town for \$39.95 plus tax, but in east TX, they are 50% higher. The next town with motels was 30-40 miles away.

This was a nice brand new Super 8 just off the bypass on Business 58. Three stories high with elevator. Six pillows on the bed with a 'coverlet' – no blanket. Big screen TV but I never turned in on. Nice furniture – good business traveler on an expense account place to stay. There didn't seem to be a lot of folks staying there – maybe six cars total in the parking lot.

I asked about places to eat and the lady at the desk said 'up the street for the next couple miles are where all the restaurants are'. OK.....I'd check it out. There was nothing to the south but a Burger King and Church's fried chicken. Across the street was a Mexican Restaurant. I started counting. In the next 3 miles there were 18 Mexican or BBQ places. One Pizza Delivery place (no sit down). Two other fast food places. Zero other restaurants. Hmmm....

I finally decided it was time to visit Dickey's BBQ, a local chain here in TX. Had a 'two meat'

plate (ribs and chicken breast), beans, dinner roll, and a salad for \$12. Not bad. Read the USA Today I picked up at the motel front desk while eating dinner. Headed back to motel after filling the gas tank at the Shell station. I checked the map and figured out what I could do the next day, and still hit the Dallas area before 'rush hour' to get home with few hassles.

Hey, it was 70 degrees outside with a stiff south wind at 5:45pm. The weather forecast said tomorrow (Friday) would be good but storms and deluges possible on Saturday. Definitely inches of rain would fall over most of TX. Sure beats the snow and 20 deg temps of MN or MT! The next cold front from Siberia was on its way to TX. The moisture had been streaming north for days. Somewhere they would collide.

I spent a couple hours reading my book "W is for Wasted" by Sue Grafton – the newest in the Alphabet series of murder who dun-it books. I started on that series in HI 13 years ago when out there county hunting with the A, B and C books. Then hit the hay about 10pm. I didn't know where to put the air conditioner/heat. It was 70 outside. It was 70 in the room. If you set it for heat, it didn't come on and circulate the air. Same for a/c. I finally decided to put it on 67 and cool it down, then later I could put the heat on 71 and warm it up. At least then it would circulate the air in the room for a while!. Hi hi. NO 'fan on' setting.

Come morning and it was breakfast at the Super 8. The alarm went off at 5:45 am. You guessed it – waffles. I made a nice one and enjoyed it. Two cups of coffee, one cup of OJ, half a banana, one egg patty – skipped the cereal. Had enough calories. I'm still bulging from indulging. Haven't lost the holiday weight and more good eating coming up. Hmmmm..... it seems the older I get, the easier the pounds go on, and more difficult they come off.

I loaded up the car – I take the radio out every night – and got set to hit the next couple counties. It had rained outside. Everything was wet – the car, the pavement. No puddles so it must have been a light drizzle. Total cloud overcast – no sun – well, it was before sunrise so that wasn't unusual – hi hi. The plan was to be in the next county about 7:30 – sunrise time in TX. The temp was 69 degrees! That's 69 degrees in the MORNING in December. Wow. Can't complain. It was going to change but might as well enjoy it. This time of year, highs about 60 are 'normal'. Lows in the 40 range.

The route was down Rt 7 to Angelina (on the needed list) – about 20 miles. Then I figured I'd hit Trinity by heading further south. Well, dang...no, you don't. You hit Houston and see that Trinity is running parallel to RT 7 by a mile or two or 3 but you 'can't get there from here'. So it seems. So I run Houston (also on the wanted list). I head a bit further down Rt 7. You are in the middle of the Sabine National Forest – hundreds of square miles of forests and the TX map shows forests and no county lines down here. The GPS does show them. I see that you can get to Houston/Trinity line...hmm...what's this road? I head on southwest on RT 7 and see a dirt road – NF-511 – must be a 'forest service' road – show up on the GPS. OK...I'll bite...it looks like a few miles to the county line. I chug along at 25-30 mph. Nothing but dense forest

both sides. No cell coverage. Zip. Nada. No houses around. Road good with a few puddles here and there. Narrow.

Turns out on Friday, James was once again 'occupying' 14.336. As far as I can tell, he 'occupied' the frequency for at least 5 hours, maybe 6 hours, and not a single solitary mobile showed up to run on 'his' frequency. Oh, too bad. He succeeded in running off every mobile on this Friday. Not a peep from any SSB mobile. Needless to say, I didn't spend a lot of time on SSB on Friday. Ran one or two counties on SSB off frequency but that was it. After the first 2 runs– few showed up – wasn't worth it. Guess a lot of dials are rusted on 14.336. Or folks just knew I would choose not to be on .336 that day. Not my problem! There were plenty of CW spots and action. Maybe no one needed it on SSB? Worked a bunch on cw on all the bands.

And I chugged along at 25-30 mph. Seemed like a lot more than a 'few miles' but I eventually got there. One little maybe 90 lb deer zipped across in front of me. No antlers. Finally the GPS said I got there. It was a 1 lane dirt road through total forest and I didn't really expect a sign. I took a picture of the GPS instead showing the line – hihi. Now...after you go a few miles through absolutely totally quiet road (zero QRN), you then get to see a power line along the road. Still pretty quiet...and , of course, right at the county line, the power line crosses the road! Dang. Well, it was quiet so it wasn't bad, but heck, after you drive without seeing a car for 3 or 5 miles.....or anything else....the power line shows up along the road just before the county line. Those dang power company folks are trying to ruin it for the ham radio folks – hi hi.



Houston/Trinity TX on the GPS

I zoomed in the GPS to get the C/L as close as possible when there. When 'zoomed in' the county names disappeared so the above picture is back to 'normal' type display to show the names. . I turned around very, very carefully. Don't want to get stuck in a ditch – hadn't seen a car at all.

I had a good run there, then backtracked back to Angelina and over to Cherokee. I stopped at a nice county line. It's one of a few that has all three of the county line markers. The new signs. The side by side signs and the 150 year old concrete markers like this:



County Line Marker
Angelina/Cherokee, TX

Here's the side by side signs:



Angelina/Cherokee TX

You can see the concrete post about 2 feet to the right of the metal side by side signs..which are on their last legs. You can barely read them. Another 10 years and they'll be so faded you won't be able to read them at all. The ones in south TX are often made out of wood. The other sign of the road at this location.

It's a long way through the counties on the way home since I'm doing them on the diagonal – 45 minutes to an hour to get across them. The drizzle started. The windshield wipers were running half the time. The temperature had dropped a few degrees. No sun but still not bad driving conditions or weather. I'm comfy in the car in short sleeve shirt.

Only a few detours occurred on the way home. Hollis, KC3X, needed Smith for Mobile Diamond. So.....after you hit Anderson, you can zip up 155 to Smith County in about 8 miles or so. You cross part of Lake Palestine and are in Smith – run it, turn around and go back through a piece of Henderson (didn't run it then) - and ran Anderson when I got back in it. Along the route it is up to Henderson for a long ways. When you get to Kaufman, you can take 198 for a short distance and catch Kaufman/Van Zandt County line – catching that pair and running them on the side of the county line road (according to the GPS – that's where it's at).

I had an apple and a fiber bar for lunch. Didn't feel like much more – the big breakfast at the Super 8 was enough to to last for a long time.

There wasn't much more after that. I hit Dallas County – not too many takers for that - and soon you hit the I - 635 beltway and 8 lanes of traffic – for the next 25 miles. Then 15 miles on US 75 (six and 8 lanes). It was 1 pm and the traffic was heavy but moving 60 mph. Where is everyone going? Sneaking out for an early week get-a-way? Heavy heavy traffic for middle of the day! It was lots of traffic but no traffic jams all the way home. I got home before 2pm comfortably before 'rush hour' which can start at 4pm or earlier on a Friday. The temp had started dropping drastically as I came around Dallas. It was 48 degrees when I hit the gas station and filled up the tank again. The wind was howling from the north at 20-30 mph. Brrr. It was drizzling continuously. That's not fun county hunting weather in my book. Our weather forecaster said “Down to the mid 30s tonight.”

Miles – 627 miles in a day and a half. 30 mpg including lots of stops to run counties. No last counties given out (that's tough in TX with 254 of them) but a few 'next to lasts'. By 5pm the temp was down near 40. To the north, OK was expecting freezing rain. East TX, where I had just been was now under Severe Storm warning for the following day. The temps will be below normal for the next week by 10 degrees as the arctic air settles in. Yuk!

Well, the good news is that the Winter Solstice is this Saturday (Dec 21) at 5:11pm. Then they'll be more daylight each day until June. That's more time for county hunting.

So...when Mother Nature hands you a few really nice days – you take advantage of them. When it turns rotten - time to chill out, surf Ebay, read some books, and goof off.

I had a fun trip. All the roads looked familiar....been there, done that at least a handful of times. The vistas included tens of thousands of acres of farm land, that turned into tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of acres of forests then back to the suburbs of Dallas. Someone has to run the counties! How else we going to get the folks finished up?

Awards Issued

USA-CA #1239	Tom, AD1B	Nov 29, 2013
USA-CA #1240	Mike, KA4RRU	Dec 7 , 2013
USA-CA #1241	Bill, K5WAF	Dec 9, 2013
Second Time \$424	Bill, NU0Q	Nov 8, 2013
4 th time #162	Gene, WB4KZW	Nov 21, 2013

Upcoming Events for County Hunters

No State QSO Parties in January

The Michigan Mini will be held April 24, 25 and 26. Details to follow. If you're interested, save the dates.

MARAC has announced that the 2015 Convention will be held in The Villages in FL in July on 13, 14, 15 and 16th. That's not the next one (2014 - California) but the one after.

That's all folks! 73