

County Hunter News

June 1, 2005

Volume 1, Issue 6

Welcome to Issue 6 of the County Hunter News, a monthly on-line publication for all county hunters, with an orientation toward CW operation. Thanks to Dennis, KK7X, who has provided us web space to bring you each edition of the CHN. Please visit his site, www.countyhunter.com and explore the many pages and pictures located there.

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

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

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

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@prodigy.net)

Notes from the Editor

Wow! The MARAC CW contest in early May started out with a bang! Same weekend as the IN QSO party, the OR QSO party, the NV QSO party, the NE QSO party- activity all day long on Saturday. Hundreds of contacts – just about every county in New England, and Oregon on the air. Hundreds of spots on the W6RK site. DX rolling in on Saturday. Many stations including DX worked 200-300 stations. Who stole the band on Sunday????

Then we had the Dayton Hamvention, with a nice County Hunting Forum/dinner, and mobiles on the road coming and going to the convention, plus the MARAC SSB contest. Not a bad month, but propagation sure is more challenging now to work those counties.

Lots to do in June, and more mobiles will be on the road with vacations, some early travel to the national convention in mid July, and generally good county hunting weather.

Dayton Hamvention Update – de N4CD

The room was nearly full at the Dayton Hamvention Forum on Friday with 100 county hunters in attendance, including OK1KT, PT2TF, K1ER, and folks from wide and far. The presentation started with a review of what has happened in the past year, and that is quite a bit!

Since this time last year, several major ‘changes’ have occurred.

- 1) **Spotting web sites.** What started out as a pair of connected web sites has now turned into one web site primarily for CW (the ch.w6rk.com) site, and one site primarily for those on SSB. Both seem to work well, with more features on the cw site for searching and more ease in spotting.
- 2) **The use of 30M** – which started just in June of last year, has now become the primary band for cw county hunting. Less than a year old, and over 2700 counties have been spotted on 30M, and likely over 3000 run. (The 40M CW freq is quite widely used, and the SSB folks are doing more work on 40M.)
- 3) The creation of the **County Hunter News On-Line.** County Hunters now have access to a monthly newsletter ‘free’ on line, with pictures and links included.

All of those are NEW within the past year! Quite a change.

What will we see in 2005/2006? Will the Single Band Award ever make it out of the Awards Committee? Will nearly all the bugs be out of the new Marac Logging Program, and will it have such goodies as transmitted county tracking for Master’s Gold, Master Platinum support, and all the other awards that folks try to earn?

A survey of hands was done during the forum. Amazingly, about 90% of those present were on cw, and nearly all had 30M capability. Almost all had 40M capability. That might be an indication of where all the ‘action’ is these days – lots of good counties being run on 30M, with decent propagation. 90% of the folks were monthly readers of the County Hunter News.

Lori, K8XTQ and Fred, KE8TQ gave interesting presentations, followed by Charlie, W0RRY who was a last minute substitution and volunteered graciously to fill in. Theresa, PT2TF, USACA #816, came up front and gave greetings to the group.

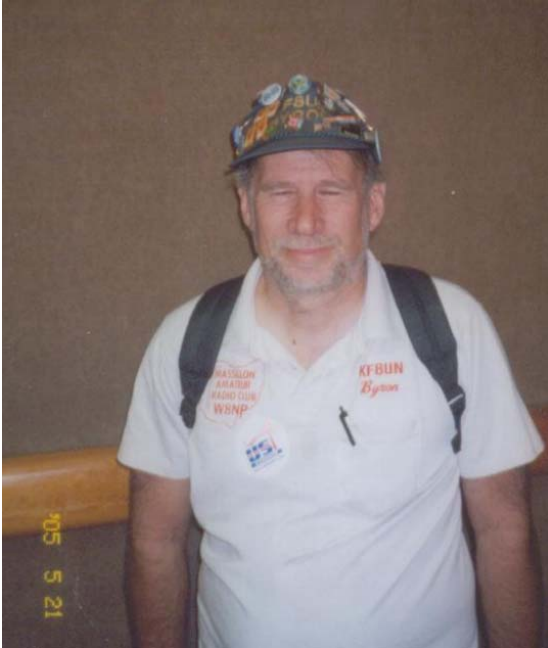
Lori mentioned that she found the A.R.R.L. Ham Radio University (<http://www.arrl.org/catalog/?item=8735>) very helpful in learning the code and with the exams. If you or someone else is trying to ‘get up to speed’, it might be worth checking out.



Time allowed us to go around the room and introduce ourselves – it’s always interesting to see the person behind the voice or cw sending, and there are always surprises. I enjoyed meeting many of the folks I’ve been talking to for a year or two, and never had the opportunity to meet in person.

Later that evening, about 25 county hunters headed to the Ryan’s Buffet Restaurant for a couple hours of eating and talking. During Saturday, a few other county hunters appeared and we got to say “HI” to them. Some can’t make the Friday activities.

John, K1ER, mentioned that 14.336 is just noise 99% of the time in Hawaii – can’t even hear a net control on cw or SSB, and mobiles ‘just aren’t there’. Folks in the mainland can use ‘countermeasures’ to help fight the sunspot decline...lower frequency bands like 30M and 40M, CW, and maybe even 80M at times.



Awards Issued

MARAC BINGO #268, Abe – W7GQK Dated: 4/23/2005
MARAC BINGO #267, Tom – N4RS Dated: 4/22/2005 - All CW
Fourth Time, #121, Herb, W9GBH, 5/2/2005
Bingo #2, Ernie, W7KQZ, 5/3/2005
Sixth Time #22, Paul WD9EJK, 5/5/2005
USACA #1122, Bob, AA9GZ, May 21, 2005
Bingo #269, Mike, KN4XP, 5/6/2005
Second Time #352, Larry, AC2J, May 11, 2005

USACA #1120 Allen WA8LKD May 12, 2005
Second Time #353, Len, W5AL, May 19, 2005
USACA #1121, Shari, KB0MMH, May 12, 2005
Master's Gold #12, Roy KC0JG, May 14, 2005
Bingo #270, Larry, AC2J, May 27, 2005

Ed, KN4Y has been awarded NUMBER ONE IN THE WORLD for his outstanding work in the 2004 10-10 CW QSO Party

CW Net on 30M

A few questions came my way about 'net procedure' on the 30M net. Unlike SSB, the CW nets run a bit different, and during much of the day during the week, there may not be a 'net control' station sitting there, looking for a mobile hour after hour when there is little activity. Perhaps only once every five or 10 or 15 minutes a station checks for mobiles ready to run (QRV). However, usually at least several stations are listening on 10.114 all the time, and will ask casual "CQ ers" to kindly QSY, since often nearly the entire band is empty and usable for casual QSOs. Some folks just seem to like to call CQ on 10.114, and usually someone will ask them kindly to QSY off the frequency, or tell them that the frequency is in use (QRL).

So, if you are out mobile and don't hear a NC(net control) station, the best suggestion I have is to send a "CHN?", and listen for a few seconds. One of 3 things will happen. Either a NC station will come back, i.e., "CHN de N4CD K". Or someone will say QRL or QRX meaning wait, something is already going on, like maybe a mobile running that you don't hear. Thirdly, a station will send "GA", waiting for you to announce your county before he either works you and disappears, or just disappears since he doesn't need the county. That's one of the "can't be bothered to announce you stations", usually. You never know.

It might take a few "CHN?" Or "QNF?" to get an answer if you have a weak signal to one of the regular NC stations due to distance/propagation. Under poor conditions, sometimes you might not be heard. Wait a few minutes and try later. Sometimes you just are calling when something is going on, and buried under the activity you may hear.

The entire CW procedure is at marac.org under "CW" and at www.countyhunter.com

When there are multiple mobiles out running, the NC station will take the first one heard for a check in, and that mobile is NR 1 to run. The NC then usually checks for other mobiles QRV? ("other /m QRV?", meaning ready to run. If another answers, he is NR 2 to run, and is asked QRX? Or QSY? That gives the mobile the chance to wait his turn, or to QSY off frequency, usually up or down 2 KHz.

Rarely are there 3 mobiles waiting to run, usually only at convention time.

Please wait for NC to OK a QSY off freq. During the MI mini, one mobile, KC0JG, decided to QSY, and was announced and moved by NC up 2 KHz. Another mobile checked in next, and moved himself up 2 KHz, and wound up right on top of the other station, and neither made any contacts. They both killed each other with QRM! As NC, I tried to tell him NO NO NO but he was gone in a microsecond after he said “QSY up 2” rather than wait a turn, and did not even tell NC what county he was in(or give NC a contact!). He was so occupied with putting out a county that he made sure he didn’t get any contacts. He wasn’t spotted since I couldn’t copy the county through the QRM, and would not have spotted him anyway since I was spotting the station I moved up there. Nuff said.

If you are having trouble hearing the net control, or are ready to run, and hear the mobile running at the current time, WORK THE MOBILE. Then a smart NC station knows you are in a new one, and likely ready to run, and likely you will be the NR1 mobile after the current one finishes if no one else is in line. If NC isn’t copying you due to distance, NC still likely hears the mobile running, and will have someone else who copies you call you at the next break!

Then we do relays when the mobile is ready after he works all the stations direct that he/she can hear. . Relays in cw terms are “QSP”. The mobile says PSE QSP, and the NC station says “CHN QSP for NF0N Garfield NE QSP?”. If you want a relay, you put in your call. And get relayed in. NC will send ‘K5OT RST’. You give your RST to the mobile. Just like on SSB, if it is 229 or 339, 3 times. Rather than ‘over’, we use a “K”. Very similar to SSB in the way we do things.

Or maybe I should say that the SSB folks use a procedure similar to ours? (grin). After all, CW was on the air 100 years ago. It took a long time for folks to figure out how to ‘modulate’ the carrier!

The Mystery Picture #1

Let’s look at the clues again.

1) If you play an accordion in **Texas**, you will develop a **strong left arm**.

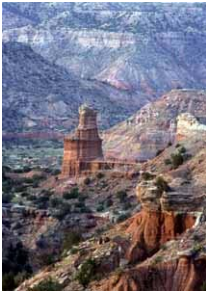
Arm + strong Texas

- 2) Picture was taken ‘through the windshield’. As someone noted, what is that funny ‘square thing’? They couldn’t figure out what it was on a car. Hmmm?...Who said anything about a ‘car’? It wasn’t on a car, but the front of a **big rig truck**. That was another ‘clue’.
- 3) Only a few folks on 30M cw use a straight key while mobile. That is a small group. A very small group. Even fewer who roam between “MN and TX”.
- 4) The first name that might come to mind if you went on the bus to the Grand Ole Opry, and indeed the person who set it all up, to whom you sent your reservation and money, is _____ . Aha! Got it yet???
- 5) “PDC”if you get Armstrong, TX, there is only one thing you will see in the atlas that is a ‘location’ that might be worth going to see.....**Palo Duro Canyon**. Or if you are internet savvy, use Google, type in “P.D.C. Armstrong Texas” and see what pops up.

As Ralph, WB4FFV, headed north in his Big Rig, on highway 207, he stopped just before the big descent into **Palo Duro Canyon**, and took the ‘Mystery Picture’. Palo Duro Canyon extends along the river, and is a Texas state park. There is a scenic overlook where you can eat lunch and enjoy the view.

Here some pictures of the “Grand Canyon of Texas” at

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/paloduro/>



Correct answers were received from Guff, KS5A, Jeffrey, AF3X, Larry W0QE, Jerry, W0GXQ, Larry, K5OT, Terry, WQ7A, Ron, KA3DRO. Congrats!

Some feedback from the Dayton Hamfest forum pleaded for ‘easier’ challenges. Someone wanted a picture of the ‘county line sign’. The next one will be easier, but don’t count on seeing the county name on a sign soon!

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On the Road with N4CD -WB4FFV

This month we hear from Ralph, WB4FFV. We had an eyeball meet in the Big Rig in the Plano, TX area, plus many of y'all have met him at the 3M where he 'engineered' the visit to the Grand Ole Opry, which started another 'tradition' for those attending the 3M.

"I got into county hunting in Dec 1979 after retiring from the USAF. Dave, N7BKW, was the net control and while running a mobile had lost him due to conditions, and asked if anyone could copy the mobile. Since the mobile was 59 with me, I finished running him.

It was not until 1984 I really got into county hunting. I decided I would try to work USA-CA, mobile to mobile without any relays, all 20 meters SSB. I am down to 90 to go for the WBOW.

In the mean time, I have put out 40 states, have received 8 last WBOW plaques, and was a very lucky recipient of the WA6VJP Memorial Award for 2002. It is tough to send and copy code going down the road in a "LARGE CAR". I have logged 193, 568 contacts, almost all on 20 meters from the mobile. The most contacts were in 2001, with 33,222.



I have been fortunate to meet many of the best Hams in the world either on the road or at the MI Convention or at the 3M.

The antenna is a 2 inch mast 54 inches long with a homebrew 4 inch coil screwdriver, with a 4 foot Francis whip on top mounted on the front bumper and it is feed direct.

Ralph WB4FFV"

Letter from N4ANV re: the 3M Mini

Let's Put the Credit Right Where It Belongs
N4ANV

I have read more than once how Bill, KM4W, has poured on me much of the credit for the great get together we had for so many years in Tennessee. Last month here he really gave a good accounting of how we got it all started. I could not add much to that, except I did tell Bill as he talked to the hotel to be sure not to obligate us to any money because we did not have any. Ha. Ha.

Boy Bill do I remember the two room suits, the bathtubs filled with drinks and beer, we did not always have the best selection, we just had a tub of beer, but hardly anyone ever complained. Then too I will not ever forget the one room was always full of penny anny poker players. They would set up a round table in the middle of one of the rooms, and set as many around as there was room, and if you got up you may not have a place when you came back. Never a lot of money, just a lot of fun. I also remember one year going to Mary Bo Bo's, and the caravan was very long, one of those sold out Fridays. Some of us had the ability to tune to channel 19, and as we went down Int. 24 all the truckers were making comments about those crazy antennas.

It's hard to forget those cold chilly days in the beginning, when the 2 rooms would be so full, that there was no place to sneak in out of the cold. I will never forget one year standing on our second floor walkway, and looking down the road by the hotel, and seeing a field full of Deer, and the season was in. They were just having their evening meal. I remember too that after a few years of filling up all the rooms, they added some 20 rooms, and that wasn't enough. We ended up filling the place up so much that they virtually closed the hotel to anyone beside us from Thurs thru Sat.

In the beginning I told Bill that we needed to cater to the women, and if we could get the women to come, then the men would follow. Well I talked to my mother, and ask if she would make a nice quilt that we could give away to the lucky lady. Well each year thereafter till my mother became unable to supply them, we gave away one of her quilts. In the end she taught Pat and I and Pat, N4UGH to do a fair job, and we kept that tradition going as long as we were there. My wife Pate and I only missed one year in all the years, and that was the last one. During the years, we made different gifts for each woman in attendance, and every one would bring gifts to be given away. Every one usually went home with a prize of some kind.

I too Bill, will never forget going to see the new spot for the soon to be "3M". It was great to see that great big space where we could be in out of the cold, sit and chat, and really enjoy the great fellowship that county Hunters always know how to create. It does seem like the penny poker left us, but never fear cribbage became the next game to be played. I never was good at it but I would play, at least the first round, then I could go chart a lot more.

Golf has always been played at the mini. It's had to forget playing at The Old Fort Park, where there were so many leaves, you would lose your ball in the leaves in the middle of the fairway., or the time a group went to tee off and one of them hit my car in the parking lot off the first tee. The car wore the dent till I traded it. We all worried about Doc, KC1NX, showing up because he would clean our plow. Bill, KM4W, always had a good game also. We had some great times on the links during those years.

Bill its hard to forget those years of checking to make sure there was enough food on the serving line to feed the people, or try to get that bunch from down TX to be quite at the back table so we could hear what was going on. Just kidding TX, it was all in good fun.

I just want to take this time to let every one know that without Bill it would never have happened, and folks never have any doubts KM4W is one of the finest we have in County Hunting, and all of us who had a chance to attend the 3M at Murfreesboro, owe him a vote of gratitude, and thanks for all he has done for members of MARAC. Bill I would like to thank some that were very faithful to support our efforts. A few of those are Andy, W3XE; Joyce , WB9NUL, Barry, W9UCW; Mitch, W4RKV; Herb, W9GBH, Pat , N4UGH; My good friend Pete, K4QFK; and I think Bill neither you nor I could have carried this on for as long as we did without the great help and support that we received from your wife Jimmy, and my wife Pat, KC4TBS.

It has been a great run Bill, and I just want to say a public special thanks to you . There will never be another like you .

Gene, N4ANV

Multi-Band Mobiles- de ND9M

There's been a lot of discussion recently about mobiles who seem to run just one band (20M typically), or just one mode (CW) primarily on the various forums. Jim, ND9M sent in a letter about his recent trip:

"Since there's been a growing amount of questions raised about why certain ops operate the way they do, especially with respect to band and mode selection, I'm going to offer the following soapbox.

My last two trips (in March to TX/CO/KS, and most recently to GA/SC), I drove a rental car (subsidized by the Bank of ND9M) and as such had to use magmount antennas. I currently use Hustler masts with triple resonator mounting plates. One mast had resonators adjusted for the three CW net

frequencies; the other mast had resonators for the two SSB net freqs.

For the recent GA/SC trip, I placed both masts on the trunk lid as far apart as physically possible. However, the mutual inductive coupling between the same-band resonators on each mast affected the SWR that operating on either antenna became unsafe to the rig. Adjusting the resonator on one mast never dropped the SWR below a very marginal 2.5:1 on either side, and it still resulted in a sky high SWR on the other.

Adjusting the other resonator in similar fashion had the same results. Also bandwidth was extremely small. Eventually, I removed the mast for the CW freqs, and the SWR on both SSB freqs dropped to nearly flat. For comparison, I replaced the CW mast and removed the SSB mast and found nearly identical results. That's when it became obvious that the two masts were not going to play nicely together.

To reasonably accommodate as many CHers as possible, I operated on the standard 20- and 30-meter CW frequencies, but did the 40-meter CW on 7244 KHz so that I could still hit the 7238 SSB net. I chose to operate CW on 14056.5 KHz rather than employ a similar shift of CW to the SSB range because there were far too many CHers who simply would not get the word and a lot more would lose out.

I had additional resonators with me and stopped to change resonators when someone asked. Also, on three occasions during the trip, ops needing a last county (one on SSB) came in after I'd not only completed the runs but also left the counties. In those cases, I returned to those counties to accomplish the QSOs.

I even stopped on a C/L in South Carolina and specifically to change 20-meter resonators to work Tony, WA9DLB for his last county there (Saluda). Unfortunately he wasn't at home at the time. It happens.

My posting went on line three days before my departure, I stated that the trip was primarily for CW but that I would have SSB available. I received only a couple e-mail requests. Except for those two, both of which by the way

were from DX stations, the only e-mails I received in advance were to e-mails I'd sent various ops letting them know that I was going to a county they particularly needed.

Both my cell numbers are posted on line. No one called while I was on the road, and although I was out of cell range at various times, there were no voice mail messages waiting for me when service was restored.

As an aside, please remember also that CW ops miss out a lot as well when SSB ops don't operate switch modes. Earlier this month, KA9PZS was on from 2 of my last 3 counties for USA-CA (Ziebach and Stanley, SD) within a two-hour period. His SSB signal on 20 was marginal at best, and we couldn't make it even with relays. If he'd gone to CW, however, the equivalent signal at that same time would have easily been good enough for me to be down to 1.

I've heard a number of well-known CHers comment on the SSB freqs that the CW nets are too fast. But N2OCW, WG6X, N9STL, K4UNF, KN4XP, and KA0SHC, among others, are in there swinging. Most CW mobiles slow down without being asked.

I believe I made as strong an attempt to put out the counties as I could. Looking at comments made in the MIRC chatroom and on the K3IMC Forum page, however, it would appear that I was supposed to do more.

I'll continue putting out what I can when I can, and will work with the limitations as best as possible. It goes with the county hunting territory.

73,

Jim, ND9M“

ED: One might also note that if you run 20/30/40M cw, and conditions are good, you have likely taken well over 20 minutes, sometimes 30 minutes! If you add in 40MSSB with another five minutes, you are likely 'out of the county' in just about all of them in GA – they aren't all that big, if you are constantly moving.

Some runs on 30M last 15 minutes, with 40 or more contacts, even at 27 wpm!

Yes, it would be nice to be everywhere, every band, mode, and even make the PSK31 folks happy as they work toward their USA Digital Award. However, then you wouldn't get to as many counties. It comes down to compromise – how many contacts, how many counties, how much time on the road.

Throw in not so great propagation on 20MSSB in Midwest, with many mobiles working 3 or 5 stations, including relays, on 20M, and sometimes it is just not worth waiting in line on 20M SSB to get to run before you leave the county. Often, you won't even get moved, since few are really listening, but in the "Zombie" mode waiting for a spot to happen and call them to the hamshack. If the mobile doesn't get moved, and spotted, the alarms don't go off.

CW – Brevity is the Key

Part I

Oh, bad to start with a pun in the title! CW ops have a long history of 'brevity'. Think of Morse code as a very efficient way to send information, and CW operators as aware of the effectiveness of brevity in getting the maximum contacts/minute on CW.

The benefits of brevity are:

- 1) Sometimes a mobile does run out of a county during a run. (I try not to, but on the interstate or other highway with no way to stop and finish the run, it can happen). Many times I stop just before the County Line sign. Some are on a tight sked, and start in their current county, and may shortly run into the next one...and even the next one. Sometimes a mobile doesn't get to run the county, since they are waiting to finish, and the current run goes on and on.

Note: If you run out of one county and been running for 8 or 10 or more minutes, please have the NC check if others ready to run. If you do it, a mobile nearby might not hear you, and get VERY frustrated as you go on for half an hour through many counties, without a chance for him/her to get to run! (Sometimes happens when no NC). If no NC, just stop for a few minutes to see if someone else starts up.

- 2) Operation goes quickly, the pile up is quickly worked, and you get your contact without lots of waiting, the mobile has time to get to other bands/modes before leaving the county, and the mobile has more time to run more counties! And those chasing counties have more opportunities!

Sounds like we're on the right approach, yes?

Samuel Morse did an excellent job in creating the original "American Morse Code". Whether it was actually Morse, or his assistant, Alfred Vail, is a point of heated debate by telegraph historians, but in either case, the result was a very efficient compact code using the least number of bits to send plain text messages.

When first conceived, Morse thought of using a 'code book', and just sending numbers representing words. For example, word 327 might be 'mother' and word 22 might be 'the'. You would send a message consisting of a stream of numbers, which would be deciphered at the other end. That way, you would have some security to any casual eavesdropper, who would not know the code book. There could even be different code books for different services, like one for military, one for government, etc. Fortunately, before the first telegraph line from Washington, DC to Baltimore, MD, was built in 1844, they went to individual letters and numbers and created our 'Morse Code'!

By using a printer's letter box, they counted how many "e"s, "i"s, "t"s, e.t.c., there were in the printer's box of type, and assigned the shortest series of dots and dashes to the most commonly used. There might be 100 letter 'e' in the box, and only 3 letter 'Z'. So you make the 'e' very short, and don't worry too much about the 'Z'.

Initially, the telegraph system used a device (register) to print the message with a stylus on a moving paper tape. You then had a permanent record of the message as received. After the entire message was received, the operator would then decipher the message and transcribe it onto a message form. It took about 10 years before the 'bosses' finally allowed direct copy from the 'click clack' of the magnets to be standard routine operating procedure. The registers then became obsolete. It was copy as the message came in, written in long hand. Many years later, operators copied directly using a typewriter (mill) as the message came in.

Did you know that Thomas Edison (inventor of the light bulb, movie projector, and phonograph) started out as a telegraph operator? So did Andrew Carnegie, Alexander Bell, and many other prominent 'inventors' of the 1800s.

If you have some time, and are interested in telegraph history, an entire excellent text book on the subject is on line at: <http://sd.znet.com/%7Ecdek14568/mpet/contents.html> Lots of interesting pictures of the old telegraph equipment as well.

Along came radio 50 years later, and folks realized that American Morse, which also used a short dash, medium dash, and long dash, and had inter-character spaces, was not the best for use on the radio. Typically, a dash was 2 to 2.5 times the length of a dit, and you had both short inter-character spaces, and normal spaces, and then word spaces. Static bursts made it hard to tell if you missed a dit or a space.

A variation in the existing code was agreed upon, and the Intercontinental Morse Code, what we use today on the amateur bands, was created. However, during the 130 year history of the telegraph, almost all systems used American Morse. Both are legal to use on the air. Several county hunters are former 'telegraphers' - W7GQK, N4AKP.

Part II - Maximizing Dits/Dahs

The era of the Morse train dispatcher probably saw the most 'efficient' use of 'code' to send/receive messages. Because the Morse train dispatcher had to work fast in order to keep his trains moving, there came into use so many abbreviations that if, as you sat in the wayside station waiting-room listening to the sounders, you could have read every letter than was passing over the train wire, and you still would have been unable to know what was going on. You might have heard the following:

“sa wn x w cmg ma hv 9 rm tm”. (Say when the extra west train is coming, I may have orders for them)

“art tnk c tr smk no” returns the op. “es hr ty cm ty in ste nw” (All right. I think I see their smoke now. Yes, here they come. They are in sight now.)

“OK 31 cy 3 rm em & let me kw hw mch wk ty gt at DR b4 c clr em ma hv to chg tt meet wi 42 no 7s ab 20 m 1 I'll hnd hm sm ti on tm at DR”. (Okay, Make 3 copies on a 31 order for them and let me know how much work they've got at Darien before you clear them. May have to change that meet with number 42. Number 7 is about twenty minutes late. I'll hand him some time on them at Darien.)

Hour after hour, the occasional periods of rest, 24 hours a day, the sounder rattled on. Few words were spelled out in train movement conversation, as this language – the 'cut' language of the old Morse train wire – clicked over the line. (text courtesy of Dots & Dashes – The Official Publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Vol 31, Issue No 2, Spring 2005).

Now, hams not only use the 'slower' International Morse, but we don't take abbreviations to that degree! We also have the luxury of semi and fully automatic keys/keyers to ease our burden. For the first 60 years, the telegrapher used a straight key- the only thing available! One of the occupational hazards of being a telegraph operator was 'glass arm'....what today we call carpal tunnel syndrome or repetitive motion syndrome! That often ended the careers of experienced 'straight key' operators.

It took over 50 years before the 'bug', a semi-automatic key, with side to side motion was perfected. It is one of a few radio/electronic devices still in use 100 years later! (or at least sitting on the shelf as a 'collectible' - hi hi).

If you want to visit a great site for key collectors, telegraph history, Morse code, and lots of interesting cw trivia , go to <http://www.telegraph-office.com/>

To be continued next month!

Operating Events

06/05/2005: DUKES, MA - Look for W1ACT to be QRV May 6th from the Gay Head Lighthouse (ARLHS reference USA-319). Activity will be on 40, 30 meters between 1600-1900 UTC and 20 meters between 2100-2400 UTC. Call on hour and half hour, CW only. QSL via QRZ.com. [Tnx DL2VFR]

Several Contests this month to consider. Field Day weekend is tough to run counties – so think about joining your local club or heading out yourself and having some fun. About the only place free from contests is 30 meters, but many of the regulars will be out having fun with their local clubs, so activity is bound to be way down. June 25 and June 26. You can work the stations for county credit, but tracking down what counties the portable stations are in is sometimes difficult, and getting QSL cards is often very challenging. However, if you are desperate, there's always hope. Several clubs in HI and AK get on, so you got chances to snag them if you need them.

There is the ARRL VHF June Contest – June 11 to June 13th. If you are on six meters, you might snag some new ones if you get some openings, or go 'mountain topping'! SMIRK also a six meter contest June 18/19. Rules at: <http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2005/june-vhf.html>

The West Virginia QSO party is scheduled for 1600 June 18 to 0200 June 19. Info at: <http://www.qsl.net/wvarrl/wvqp.html>

The MARAC National Convention is in Roanoke Virginia this year in July.

Trip Report by KD7KST , Bill

The Adventures of running San Juan County, WA by Bill Magruder, KD7KST

San Juan County is located in the Northwest corner of the State of Washington and consists of four major islands and several smaller islands located in the Strait of Georgia. This county is one of the few that is difficult to get to. You have to take a boat, ferry or airplane to reach this county.

My adventure started when I got the bright idea that I should finish up running all counties in Washington State (39 of them) using the digital mode PSK31. Then I looked over the needs list and saw that Maurice, K0EH was down to San Juan for his last in the state and Bob, NK7I only needed Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan to finish up Washington. Also I knew Matt, W0NAC needed only Skagit and Mason to finish up the state on all digital modes. Also in the 49 years I lived in this State I'd never been to San

Juan Island. I've been to the top of Mt. Rainier and every other county in the State and I think I've driven about every mile of the State Highways at one time or another. So to make a long story short I had enough excuses and decided to go on a County Hunting run and head over to San Juan county.

So I figured out some sketchy plans and took off Thursday, May 19th at 4:30 am PDT. After running 5 counties and probably 300 miles I made to the Anacortes Ferry Dock (Skagit County) about 15 minutes after the 2:30 pm Ferry left. Darn, I knew I shouldn't have made that detour to run Island County. So it was a 2 hour wait for the 5:00 pm Ferry. The wait went by quickly as I listened to the mobiles run and ran Skagit County while waiting. The parking area over looks the Puget Sound and there is almost no electrical noise. I even worked a DX station when I ran Skagit while I was waiting. The ferry ride takes an hour and a half so I finally arrived at Friday Harbor at 6:30 pm local time.

It was later than I planned because of the ferry I missed, but I drove up the hill past the water tower and found out the airport (see map) which has a clear view to the South east. I turned the radio back on and found people still waiting for me. I worked about a dozen people that late in the evening on 20 meter SSB. I then started running PSK31 on 20, 30 and 40 meters and worked another dozen people using this digital mode and two more county hunters found me--Matt, W0NAC and Larry, N2OCW.

By then it was time to find the Best Western which I had booked through the internet at \$95 a night business rate (CH Business?). Figured it would be a standard motel room and it would be better than the front seat of my pickup truck. Boy was I surprised, I got a real nice suite with a kitchen, living room and a separate bedroom, real fancy for a county hunter. I'm sure that room goes for \$250 a night during the summer season. Later Terry, WQ7A recommended the Hotel De Haro located in Roche Harbor on the west side of San Juan Island is another great place to stay, I'll have to try that Hotel out next trip.

The next day I got up early and drove to the southeast end of the island in the San Juan Island National Historical Park (see map). I waited for 20 meters to open up around 8:00 am local time and ran it from the beach parking lot. A nice quiet area with clear takeoff to the Southeast. I made another dozen QSO's and then went for a drive around the Island, which probably takes an hour. I learned real quick that you need to stay away from any power lines because they are all real noisy. These are Medium Voltage power lines servicing the home and farms and they are the worst I've ran across. Must be all the salt on the insulators.

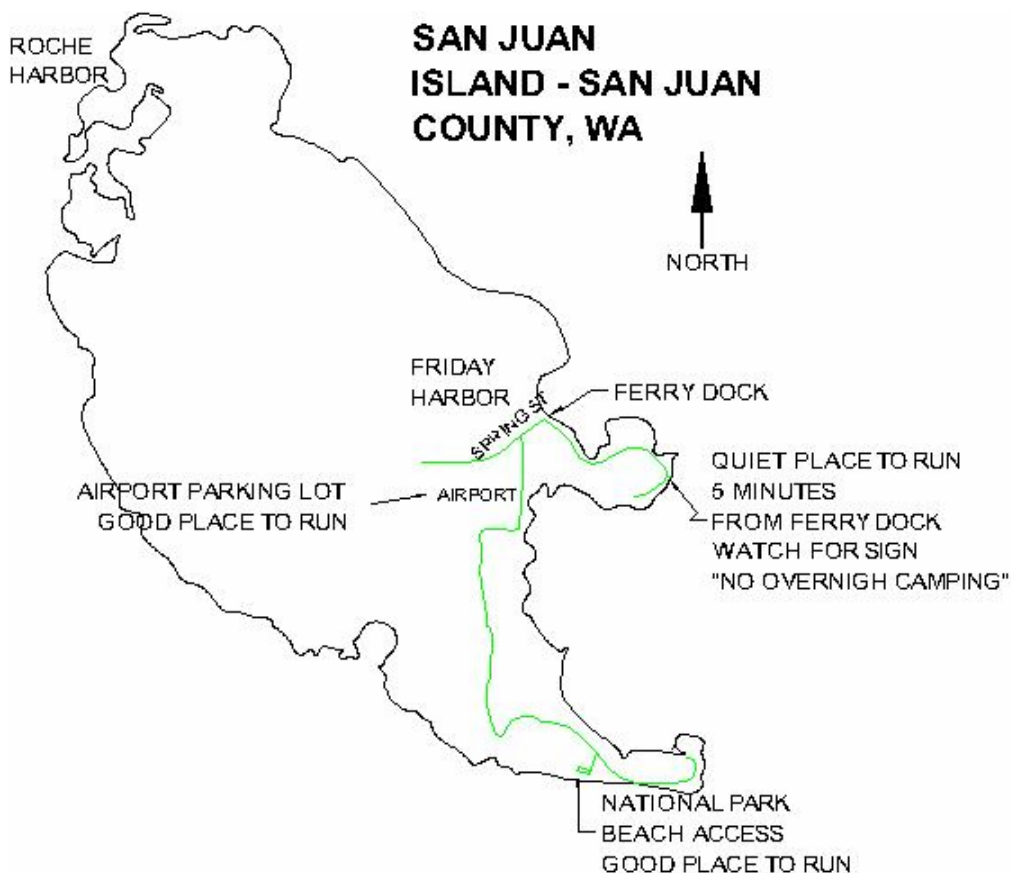
I made a final run around 9:45 am in another quiet area I found about 5 minutes east of the Ferry dock (see map) figuring I would have plenty of time to catch the 11:10 Ferry. I got back to the Ferry Dock at 10:00 am and the parking lot was full. I ended up in the over flow lanes which means that you may not get on the Ferry and would have to wait for the next one. I got on the ferry but they squeezed me between two semis on the car deck. I couldn't even open the doors so I was stuck in my pickup truck unless I really

needed to get out, which would require crawling out the window. I was feeling too old for that, so I stayed in my pickup truck and listened to that radio that's built into the dash that has a button that says AM/FM and you don't have to listen to QRM and QRN. See photo.

San Juan County was a great place to visit and I should have stayed longer but there is always another county down the road. If you ever make it up to Washington State, try to make out to San Juan County. Washington State Ferries run from Seattle, Anacortes and even Victoria, British Columbia and serve four of the Islands. If you want to make a quick trip to the Islands, several charter airlines fly from Seattle and other places to Island County and you should be able to get a rental car at most of the airports. A search on the internet using Google or other search engines will give you all the information you need about Ferries, Motels and places to see.

I had a great time and a little bit of adventure getting to San Juan County. I ran a total of 18 counties in Washington and Oregon making a big loop of course to maximize the number of Counties. I got a couple of new last counties and finished Washington State up for Matt, W0NAC on digital. Only down to two more counties I need to run on PSK31 to complete Washington State.





here some links to follow up on this

<http://www.sanjuanisland.org/>

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/>

4U1UN - Not a “County” for USACA

A question was posted on the forum about whether one can ‘count’ 4U1UN, the United Nations Building in downtown Manhattan, New York City as part of ‘New York’ county.

4U1UN is located physically in New York County, NY, but is treated as a separate country. It has borders with the USA, like Mexico and Canada, and even lies completely within the USA, but is not like an ‘independent city’ or Native American reservation that are still part of the USA. You cannot run it with your USA license. You cannot run

mobile from there without permission from the ‘government’ of 4U1UN. It’s in the same category as the Vatican and SM0M, both contained wholly within the country of Italy, but both separate DXCC entities.

For the USACA award, Ted has posted:

“4U1UN - a DXCC entity - The USA-CA rules really don't cover this situation. In my opinion, the UN Building can't be counted as an "independent city" since it is a DXCC entity. Nor is it a park or reservation. Any contact with 4U1UN is a great DXCC catch, but will not count for the USA-CA award.

Ted Melinosky K1BV
USACA Custodian “

Since K1BV is the officially custodian, he’s not likely to approve an application using 4U1UN for NY, NY.

The discussion continues within MARAC as to whether a foreign “country” with separate licensing, security forces, and authority can be a “county”.

On the Road with N4CD/W0RRY

The ‘urge to go’ hit, and it was time for the Dayton Hamfest. Charlie W0RRY volunteered to ‘ride along’ on the trip to Dayton OH via the ‘county hunter way’. It’s a two day trip to Dayton, but we managed to take six days to get there.

After I headed up to Tulsa, we departed the next day. We had the trusty IC706, a MFJ Cub 30M transceiver complete, including battery supply, clothes for 2 weeks, back up radios and tools and parts. This was to be another ‘connect the dots’ trip. The car has a K8CW type system for 20/30/40 cw, plus we have an extra hamstick set up on 40m SSB.

The trip was posted on the K3IMC site, and then a few said “I need just a few, and XYZ county is just one county south” or ‘north’. So I adjusted the trip slightly to hit a few more along the way. Sometimes it is a matter of zigging vs zagging on the route. Many of the counties on the trip were desperately needed.

Charlie had copied his coloring book map, showing counties he still needed for 5th time, added in the Master’s Gold ones he needed, and the CW counties. I put counties I needed for CW, or 30M, or needed to transmit from, and that gave us lots of dots to connect. We couldn’t get all of them, but tried to wind a path through many of them, that got us to Cleveland OH, then to Dayton by the time the Hamfest started. The same for the way home, although by then we are usually tired and the route is more direct.

Sometime on Saturday, someone stole the propagation. Apparently Friday night, there had been some spectacular aurora, with a G5 level geomagnetic storm. Conditions on Saturday and Sunday weren't great, but we still worked dozens and dozens on 30M and 40M, with an occasional trip up to 20 SSB/40SSB. The first day we wound through MO into IL. One time we got so turned around, we had to use the GPS to get us back on course (the nice road we were on turned into gravel road, then started to simply disappear!). We had missed the road we wanted by ¼ mile and wound up on the 'wrong road'. I guess we earned a few "Magellan points" on the trip. Normally the computer is off in the back seat. There's not enough room for all the stuff up front. ("Magellan" points are awarded for missed turns, messed up navigation, winding up in the wrong county after miles of driving - in honor of a Florida county hunter who had his share of missed turns/wrong turns while running counties in GA).

Also, on trips, I generally stick to roads on the Rand McNally state maps. I find there isn't enough time to go on tertiary roads (roads with 4 digit numbers for example, route 4057) and there are too many unknowns about the quality of the road (sometimes gravel or dirt, or nearly impossible to get through). There are more 'antenna eating trees' on the small roads since 18-wheelers don't keep the trees trimmed at 13 foot clearance either! One advantage of a having a navigator is that he/she can warn you about low hanging branches that you may not notice immediately.

With the MFJ Cub (a 2 w QRP radio) we could work each other in the counties we needed contacts. The antenna was a 56 ohm resistor with long leads which provided adequate signal (60 over) at short distances. A Gel-cell battery allowed the radio to be completely independent. Previously we had used a Mizuho 6 meter SSB/CW handheld transceiver for contacts, but now we were both interested in 30M counties!

Also on this trip, I was giving out 'Master Platinum' counties, and also trying to work someone good for Master Platinum from each county. Serendipitously, KC0JG just received his Master's Gold Award on the day we left, which makes him good for the Platinum award after than day! That helped me get credit for the counties I went through when he worked me. I didn't realize that till later.

Master Platinum is like the Master Gold award, where you can get credit for a county by working someone from the county (who has a MG or Bingo). Additionally, Master Platinum requires that you work someone with MG from 500 separate hundred of counties. You just can't sits in the hamshack and earn this award!

We wound up getting to the border of IL and KY the first day. The next day we re-discovered the 'paved cow paths' of KY. There are lots of roads in KY that you average about 35 MPH. Through county after county, on roads that have single or two digit numbers, you find that you never are going straight for more than 100 feet, with the steering wheel going back and forth, the logger trying to write, hold on, and not get tossed back and forth as the car goes back and forth, up and down. Most of the county roads have no shoulder, are fairly narrow, and sometimes have 6 or 12 inch drop offs.

Not a place to take a motor home! The roads follow the ridge tops for a while, then go up and down over the hills. It's not the place to learn to send cw while driving.

We were running on 30M first, usually then going to 40m cw, then 20m cw. Not much in the way of 20M DX coming in. The propagation was poor to Europe and only a few DX stations were worked. A month ago, we had worked 5 or 10 from each county in Iowa. On 20M, again the folks were running about 5 contacts on 20m SSB from each county. With the 3 bands, we were running 10-40 contacts a county.

After KY, we thought things would get a little better, but eastern OH is not much different than KY! Even worse, there had been lots of rain, and we had at least a half dozen major detours from closed roads – sometimes the first road was closed, the next road was also closed, and we had to go 35 miles out of the way to get back to where we wanted to be. Then, in the next county, the same thing!

Of course, when you are going through needed counties, it's usually because no one else has wandered there recently, and it's off the beaten path.

Finally we would up getting out of the hills of KY and eastern OH, into northern OH, and made a stop in Cuyahoga county at the National Cleveland Style Polka Museum. Here is link http://www.clevelandstyle.com/phof_001.htm Somehow I'd managed to not get there for 2 years, so this was the year. Last year we spent a full day at the Air/Space Museum in Dayton – definitely a 'must see'.

After that short visit, it was off to Dayton OH. We had some extra time, and added in a few counties 'on the fly'. We still had the maps with the needs on them, and made a 200 mile 'detour' to get a few more counties before Thursday evening.

Friday came along with the famous Hamvention flea market (possibly the largest in the world!). In typical Dayton fashion, the weather was cool, and very damp and trying to rain. It had poured Thursday evening. The rain held off, and lots of goodies were for sale. Steve AA8HH and Don K8MFO had flea market spots. After a few hours, we headed inside to see the goodies there, and attend some of the forums. Oh, two days at Dayton, and you are worn out – aching feet and back. I'm not used to so much walking and wandering!

This year the ARRL also hosted the National Convention at the same time, so there were lots going on. I don't know what the attendance was, but there was a good crowd. Mobs of people milling around inside, and lots of money changing hands.

Saturday the sun came out, and it was a great day for the flea market. I spent a few bucks, but managed to escape without buying too much extra 'stuff'.

Getting home was fairly simple after that – another 2 days on the road wandering through IN and IL, then zipping down the interstate to Tulsa. A 3000 mile trip, with 50 pages of

log (maybe 2500-3000 contacts). Charlie, W0RRY did 99.9% of the logging. Thanks to ND9M and others that helped run the mobiles, spot them, and keep things going.

A Different Breed of County Hunter

There are folks out there who just visit the different counties. Not hams! Some take pictures of the court houses. On the Yahoo message boards, there is one called County Hunting (with little activity).

However, you might find the following site interesting.

<http://county.schul.cjb.net/>

Take the link off the site to 'Ghost Counties'. These are the counties that 'might have been' but never happened, or died quickly after becoming counties, or became absorbed by another county.

Too bad this is not a radio active county hunter on CW! He's been in 2500 counties!

De N4CD

Report on Digital Voice recorder – de W0QE

After copy N8KIE and WQ7A talk on the MIRC about recording county runs I was very impressed when Terry(WQ7A) sent me a recording from one of his runs. The quality of the recorder is to say the least, amazing. You can record up to 22 hours using 2 - AAA batteries.

The unit can be seen, with a review, at viewed:

<http://digitalmedia.oreilly.com/2005/05/18/ds2.html>

While the article boasts a suggested retail cost of \$149. I actually bought mine from www.newegg.com for \$119.00 plus shipping (\$3.75). What is especially sweet about this unit is the size and pure quality of the playback sound. Anyone wanting a sample send me an email of a county I ran. You do not have to speak that loud and there is a noise reduction or cancellation mode that you can use. You can record at different lengths depending on the quality of recording you want. BUT; you can record up to 22 hours of non-stop recording which is nice for county hunting trips or recording a contest you are participating in. It comes with a leather protective case and batteries plus software. Read the article. Do your homework and if you want to record on the fly this may be your weapon of choice. I might add it comes with software but you can buy additional

software for voice recognition for converting over to written text providing you have some basic software on your computer. Now if someone had a way of taking the data and converting it to a log program no more handwriting -- too much dreaming I guess. Anyway thanks to Bob(N8KIE) and Terry(WQ7A) for the heads-up. see ya

De W0QE

Mystery Picture Challenge II

An interesting picture came in, so I decided that it would be nice to have another Mystery Picture Challenge. Get out your thinking caps. Sorry, no 'county line signs' included, but **the name of the state and the county is included** in the clues. Likely the clue that seems least relevant to county hunting is important. Five folks solved the first one. How many will get this one?

Name the County/State and the County Hunter!

The Clues:

- a) I run primarily on SSB, but have put out all the counties in one state on both SSB and CW. I have put out counties in 34 states, 1550 counties.
- b) I am the only one "on the net" using my first name. I have at least a few stars and other MARAC awards that make me a 'valuable' mobile for award purposes.
- c) I live in a state where you must cross a long bridge to get to the 'other half' of the state, or else get there via other states.
- d) I have put out all the counties on one state on both CW and SSB, but am on SSB primarily. I gave out a WBOW on cw, and a few last counties on cw. I run hard, run late, and keep getting asked for more and more counties – and my 'navigator' usually agrees.
- e) Some kids growing up in Alaska might at First want to be a D.J. . Maybe later they go to college and become a lawyer with a J.D. degree. .
- f) The location of the picture is somewhere which is nice to visit in late May, June, July and August, but gets mighty cold and snowy in the winter time. Cold enough to build an igloo. It's a long way between places in this state, and it only has a few "counties".

- g) I've been "DX" at least once and hand delivered a USACA plaque to VK4AAR. You might have heard me on the net announce the award.
- h) If you visited Frankenmuth during your trip to the National Convention a few years ago, you met me.

Who and where am I? Send your answer to N4CD (telegraphy@prodigy.net)



If you need more challenges, check out the Crossword Puzzle at:
<http://www.arrl.org/news/puzzles/2005/05/25/1/?nc=1>

Well, that's another issue of the CHN. See you next month!

