



Potomac Valley Radio Club Newsletter

August 2009 Edition 2009 Contest Re-Cap Special

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An introduction from the Editor

As the 2008-2009 contest season came to a close, it struck your editor that while the PVRC and 3830 email reflectors may be full of detailed accounts of any given contest, we've never taken a look back at the contest season as a whole.

This issue of the PVRC Newsletter is just that. A compilation of individual write-ups of the many contests that PVRC members participated in during the 2008-2009 contest season starting from the WAE through the early summer VHF contests.

Your editor chose those postings that show the wide range of experiences of your fellow members. In compiling these write-ups, two themes jumped out. First and foremost, is that regardless of score, each and every participant had fun. That certainly comes through in K0DQ's write-ups! Second, regardless of the final score or amount of time participating, each and every participant learned something from their experience.

My hope is that you, the reader, will come away feeling motivated to participate in any given contest regardless of your station size and perceived abilities. And, too, that it's okay to sit it out.

Thanks to all who took the time and effort to write about their experience! If your favorite contest isn't included, you didn't write it up!

The 2008-2009 contest season, as told by:

August:	WAE CW: K4XD, W8OHT
September:	WAE SSB: N3KS ARRL September VHF QSO Party: K3ZO CQWW RTTY: K4CZ, W4PK
October:	CQWW SSB: K3ZO
November:	ARRL Sweepstakes CW: K0DQ ARRL Sweepstakes SSB: KE3Q WAE RTTY: K4GMH CQ WW CW: K0DQ (P40A), W3IUU
December:	ARRL 10: N8II ARRL 160: N3KS
January:	ARRL RTTY Roundup: K3MM CQ 160 CW: N3UM, NS3T ARRL January VHS Sweepstakes: K3ZO
February:	ARRL DX CW: N4ZR, K3ZO, NN3W CQ WPX RTTY: W3ZZ CQ 160 SSB: N2QT, N3HBX
March:	ARRL DX SSB: K3ZO CQ WPX SSB: WX3B, K4ZW Russian DX: K3ZO
May:	CQ WPX CW: W4PM

K4XD in the WAE CW (August)

Well, that was fun. I'm enjoying the "leisurely approach" to contesting, getting up when I feel like it, going out in the yard, working on the pool, then feeling the itch to see how the bands are and going back to the radio for an hour or two. I don't know, it's going to be tough getting my head back into the Fall/Winter Marathons!

Band	QSOs	QTCs	Mults
80:	18	10	12
40:	49	46	20
20:	129	138	34
15:	21	20	13
10:	12	0	7
Total:	229	214	86
Total Score =	95,472		

Although the WAE seems like a more leisurely pace here. Probably because with my modest station, I can never hear enough of the weaker stations to get a real pace going when you can't work domestic stations. For most of the contest my rate was between 15 and 25/hr. I guess sending QTC's slows things down too.

I used this contest as a platform for working on and testing out my new SO2R setup. I acquired a used SixPak so I can now put any antenna on either of the two rigs, one an Icom 756 Pro II, the other a Yaesu FT-857D, which started life as a backup rig for both the mobile and the base station. It's a capable little radio, and when I decided to start tinkering with SO2R, it stepped up and said, "hey, I know I look like a QRP rig, but I can put out 100W, honest!" and it did. So what do you pay to go from SO1R to SO2R? Let's see, a SixPak relay box, two ICE bandpass switchable filters, an SO2R switching box (using the EZMaster here), a couple hundred feet of coax and control cable lines, some more ICE filters to keep Mother Nature out of the coax and control cables, some shelves for the desk to hold all this stuff, enough cables behind the desk to bring the Fire Marshal to tears... OK, adding it up now... Yikes, that's a lot of money for 5 to 15% more QSO's! But how can you put a price on an obsession, er, hobby?

Configuring the EZMaster has been, well, an experience that separates the men from the boys. I feel about 9 years old. I did manage to get CW working before the contest, although in the process of rearranging the entire shack (need to update that QRZ.com photo, oh those were the simple days...), I think I managed to pull a few wires loose, resulting in some pretty random behavior at the start of the test. The most laughable was actually right before the test, when I started a QSO with someone to see how it was working, and promptly lost my keyboard to RFI. The mouse still worked, limiting my communication to the macros that were already stored in WinWarbler. I felt like I was having a conversation where I had been gagged and could only talk by holding up one of 12 cards.

him: "K4XD de XX2XXX, GE OM, NAME HR IS FRED, HOW COPY?" me: "XX2XX de K4XD 599 001
him: "K4XD JOLLY WELL THEN, THE STRONG AND SILENT TYPE EH?"
me: "599 de K4XD 73 TU"
him thinking "guess he doesn't speak English"

I resolved the keyboard problem with one of those "I never thought -that- was connected to -this-" moments by reseating the serial port connector in the back of the RCS-12 antenna switch. It delivers band data to the antenna switch, and I guess noise on that line was somehow getting into the system and causing problems elsewhere.

And so to the radios... I fired up right at 0000 and did some S&P on 20M, and the theme of the contest, lots of DL stations, started immediately. According to SH5, 32% of my Q's were from Germany. Hungary was a distant second with 5.9%, Italy with 5.5%, and Romania with 5%.

With 23 Q's on 20M in the first hour, I decided maybe 40M would be running a bit warmer so hopped down there and bagged another 25 Q's in the second hour. Well, maybe 80M will be warmer? Hmm, only 15 Q's in the next hour on 80M, using this time to do a little SO2R between 40M and 80M. Just getting the feel of the setup and listening to CW in both ears.

I hung up my headphones early, at 0304, and got up early but didn't find any EU until 1039 as 20M started waking up. Some more S&P, with northern EU stations in Wales, Belgium, and Norway starting things off with some new mults.

K4XD in the WAE CW – contd., (August)

At 1114 the DL's re-asserted themselves, and I enjoyed a modest run on 14057 for about 20 minutes

QTC's feel like double-dipping for points, but they sure slow any momentum you may be building in a run. Things died down at 1201 and I went up to 15M, wow, nice to see some EU action on 15!

Other fun moments: 10M open (mostly to DL, of course!) Sunday at 1300. Anyone who has had their ticket more than a couple of years is going to laugh, but I worked five first ever 10M DXCC countries - drum roll - DL, G, HG, OM and YT. It's a sign of the sunspot times that I will probably get DXCC on 160M before 10M! 20M Sunday afternoon around 2100 was open nicely, with a fun run on 20M where I could actually hear most of the stations without asking for 4 repeats!

I'm beginning to understand why the hard core contesters love their stacked monobanders and Beverage antennas. And finally, I got on 40M with 20 mins left in the contest and found a hole at 7004. Hmmmm, this is prime real estate, wonder if anyone will even hear me? Yup, they did, and someone spotted me just to make sure I got swamped with callers. It sounded more like a chorus of cicadas on a hot July night than Samuel's Morse code, and I did the only thing I could... wait until the cicadas died down and one or two lone ones chirped. Gotcha!

Well, that's a big write-up for a small score, but that's just the Yin and Yang of it... thanks for the EU Q's and CUL...

Rig: Icom 756ProII , Yaesu FT-857D

Antenna: s Homebrew hexbeam on a Wibe surplus crankup mast at a whopping 12M

Couple of Cobra Ultralights - linear loaded doublets, they work a treat

Software: WriteLog

W8OHT in the WAE CW (August)

After a grueling nine-hour S&P call sorting process and a one-hour very gratifying CQing experience I chalked up 35,000 points...my personal best in this one. In WAE you quickly pass over stations sending time numbers ahead of call letters because they have to be stateside and if the interspersed "R" transmissions are loud you've probably already worked the recipient EU station anyway. Its really best instead to just call CQ, I found.

Perhaps in no other contest would being assisted by the packet cluster be more helpful. Can you imagine listening to all ten QTC's in order to once hear the EU station's call during his subsequent CQ.

While I disconnected the basement phone, which now allows my N1MM logger to reliably maintain connection (even when transmitting a KW to the 80m inverted vee just outside), I chose to go unassisted again, leaving the packet window totally uncorked inside the N1MM program.

Details:

80m: 5Q's/40m: 42Q's/20m: 94Q's/15m: 4Q's = 288 Q's total

Total band Cty's = 122; total score = 35,130 points

The 32-bit processed noise reduction feature in the K-3 proved its worth Saturday night on 40 meters for sure. The 4-1000A in the G-G linear (Home Brewed) tooled along nicely on all bands, staying mostly deep black except when retuning in the process of changing bands.

Always enjoy the WAE, but also always glad when its finally over after seemingly having worked everyone that's heard. I know I need to start earlier in the CQing next time.

N3KS in the WAE Contest SSB (September)

I wasn't sure I would even operate the contest until Friday, so did not put up my 80m vertical - which I sorely missed. Presently the rotor is broken for the Optibeam antenna - but it broke pointing/fixed at Europe - so, that was 'convenient' for this contest. Ended up putting about 25 hours in, and had other things going on that kept me off the radio during European sunrise Friday night and most of the 20m morning run Saturday.

Band	QSOs	QTCs	Mults
80:	118	51	128
40:	270	305	120
20:	1033	923	96
15:	2	0	4
10:	0	0	0
Total:	1423	1279	348
Score =	940,296		
Operating Time (hrs):	25.5		

Fred's (K3ZO) propagation prediction was pretty dead on, and when 10 and 15 meters are that quiet it makes the band choices pretty simple. I only made 2 Q's on 15m, and one was because GW4BLE called in on 20m and asked that I 'hurry to 15' and make a Q with

them. From what I could see of the packet spots, the W1's had a bit longer opening to EU on 15 (i.e. longer than 5 minutes.)

All in all it was fun, and for some reason it seemed that there was a lot of gentleman behavior on the bands amongst the contesters, especially considering that people were so 'compressed' to 20m during the day. I also was impressed with the number of W/K stations who called in just trying to help me out with a Q - - where are those guys when I need them in November SS?...

I ran SO2R - left radio was an Orion and right radio a K3. Basically I thought the Orion was needed for 40m split operation (no sub receiver in my K3 yet - but as Fred had already pointed out - and I discovered for myself that split operation is not really necessary on 40m anymore) and I'd use the K3 for the other bands - with spot jumping as needed by both radios. I was impressed with the K3, it's receiver is first class. However, I'm not convinced the K3 transmitter speech processor is as good as the Orion's - it does not seem to be (yet) capable of the same 'bone crushing pileup busting audio' that an Orion (or MP) can do.

Again it was fun to ride packet with WX3B during the slower times, and also to have a three way rag chew with K3LP/WX3B on Jim's 20m run frequency right after he got spotted in Europe.

Equipment:

Orion, K3, Acom 2000A

3el SteppIR @ 58ft, Optibeam OB12-4 @ 90ft, Inverted Vee @ 85ft for 80M

K3ZO in the ARRL September VHF QSO Party (September)

Band	QSO	Grids
6	116	22
2	69	17
Totals	185	39
Final Score =	7215 points	

Beams still stuck Northeast. SWR on 2 meter beam jumped way up about three hours before the end, so I had to stay on 6 from that point till the end of the contest.

Judging by the strength of the beacons, both bands were pretty flat. But K1WHS and W2SZ were louder than normal on both bands, so guess there was some ducting if you were up high enough.

K4CZ in the CQWW RTTY (September)

I couldn't operate much in the evening/night due to family obligations so I spent most of my time on 20m. Propagation was very good...20m to Europe seemed to stay open throughout the daylight hours. This was the first time I've reached 500 Qs on a single band in a contest. About 65% of my Qs were in run-mode...average run rate was about 55-60 Qs/hour. Best hour was 72 Qs.

Band	QSOs	Pts	State/Prov	DX	Zones
80:	0	0	0	0	0
40:	156	263	40	38	13
20:	522	1345	35	78	23
15:	36	91	6	19	12
10:	1	1	1	1	1
Total:	715	1702	81	136	49
Score =	452,732				
Operating Time (hrs):	17.6				

I haven't operated RTTY since CQ WPX RTTY in February. Since then, I replaced the hard drive in the shack PC. I had forgotten about this and didn't check my RTTY setup prior to the contest. As a result, I spent the first couple hours of the contest fixing a few problems with my N1MM and MicroHam MicroKeyer settings and my receive au-

dio routing so actual time on the air was about 16 hours. After the setup was fixed on Saturday morning, the station worked flawlessly during the rest of the contest.

Comparison of 2008 and 2007 scores:

I beat last year's score by 7% even though I spent much less time on the air (16 hours vs. 25 hours in 2007). Originally, I only planned to spend about 10 hours on the air this year. However, I extended my "butt-in-chair" time since propagation was so good. This year, I had a much higher average hourly rate, 8% more Qs and 29% more QSO points due to much better propagation, especially to Europe. However, mults were down 17% from last year (266 vs. 320), mostly because I didn't operate on 80m (which accounted for 68 mults last year). Why no 80m...not even one hour? The primary reason is that, since I didn't expect to operate at night, I never even bothered to fully set up my 80m antenna for the contest!

The lessons from this contest were so obvious, I'm almost reluctant to state them...but I will, if only to reinforce them to myself ;-)

- 1) Test your station setup BEFORE the contest, ideally several days before...even if it was working fine the last time you used it.
- 2) You can never have too many antennas...even if you don't plan to use one of them, get it ready anyway.
- 3) If you have limited time to operate, try to schedule it to maximize your total score not just Qs...a little time on each band can be better than lots of time on a single band.
- 4) Propagation will be best when you have the least time or are the least prepared for a contest...maybe I should dub this "K4CZ's Law."
- And last but perhaps most important...5) Make sure you check the contest calendar before you agree to host your visiting relatives for the weekend ;-)

Thanks for the Qs.

Rig: Kenwood TS-930 w/ Piexx board, Ameritron AL-80B (running 400w)

Antenna: Force 12 C-4 @ 50' for 40-10m

W4PK in the CQWW RTTY (September)

I did not do quite as well as I did two years ago where I had 1192 Q's for a total score of 1,191,610. And I did this in slightly less time of 27.5 hours. I definitely did a lot better than I did last year as a conflict with out-of-town company allowed me to only make 35 Q's.

Highlights of the contest included being called by VK6HD on 40M Sunday evening and being called by several JA's late Saturday afternoon on 20M during one of my runs. I had some pretty successful runs on 40 and 20 meters but only after the bedlam had died down by late Saturday morning.

I was less successful on 80M in spite of using high power and a 4-square antenna. I never succeeded in getting a run going on 15M. I only heard two stations on 10M, with one being K1TTT and the other being a local, my good friend N2QT.

W4PK in the CQWW RTTY—contd., (September)

I still am not comfortable calling CQ while searching for multipliers on other bands, although I did log a few Q's by this method this time. I had much better luck using both radios in the S&Ping mode. I would tune both radios and watch both to see if I needed a contact. If I needed both, I would contact one, retune that radio to another station after I had completed the

Band	QSOs	Points	Zones	DX:	States	Mults
80m:	145	266	13	37	36	
40m:	294	671	23	68	36	
20m:	653	1738	27	76	38	
15m:	60	146	15	29	10	
10m:	2	2	1	1	2	
Total:	1154	2823	79	211	122	412
Score = 1,163,076						
Time on 29.49 hours						

contact, and went to the other radio to complete that contact. I estimate that this increased my S&Ping rate by about 50%.

I ran assisted because it was neat to watch my software band maps for both radios fill with all the spots. But I found it to be of little use as any DX spotted immediately created bedlam! On the other hand, I was spotted a couple of times but I could tell little or no difference in stations calling.

I inherited the usual CW station (40M) sending "test" on my space frequency. When I moved he moved with me. When I quit CQing, he went on to another station nearby.

I also had a "G" station appear on my frequency with a QRZ as I was in the midst of a good run. I responded, we exchanged reports, and then he proceeded to call CQ! This ticked me off for a few seconds but in the end I graciously yielded the frequency to him.

K3ZO in the CQWW SSB (October)

Contesting at age 70 means eating all my meals at the dinner table instead of in the shack, taking time out to watch a bit of college football on Saturday and NFL football on Sunday, and taking a nap whenever I get sleepy, regardless of how band conditions are at the moment. The resulting 33 hours in the operating chair looked like this:

BAND	QSOs	Countries	Zones
160	39	28	9
80	189	64	16
40	471	67	21
20	1072	12	33
15	390	87	21
Totals	2161	358	100
Score = 2,775,022 points			
Operating Time: 33 hours			

My 80 meter Yagi is missing one third of its driven element so I learned "how the other half lives" using my half-sloper toward Europe. 40 meter rotor not working so 40 meter beam is fixed on Europe. Low noise EWE RX antenna for 160 not working. Other than that all antennas OK. The Orion rebooted itself several times and blew a fuse once. This meant that I had to re-record my "CQ Contest" a few times, other than that, no big deal. Titan 425 amp power supply blew a fuse once and tripped shack circuit breaker once. Those fabulous 40 meter runs into Europe took

their toll!

Highlights: 40 meters! Having Europeans able to operate in our part of the band sure makes a difference. When they tell me that I was equal in strength to K3LR it makes me happy; when they tell me I have a "colossal signal" it makes me even happier, and when checking DX Summit for my call after the contest and seeing that a JA reported me S9 during one of my European runs it makes me feel that I was really smoking on that band. European sunrise is better for runs than our late afternoon/early evening because there are fewer BC stations on the band then. More frequencies open for running. Great run to JA on 20 late Saturday afternoon. Having SU1KM call me on both 20 and 15 was nice. Never heard a peep on 10, didn't go there much. Lots of fun!

K4GMH in the WAE RTTY (November)

That was fun!

Thanks to all who were kind enough to work me and pass or receive QTCs. Messed up several times at the beginning due to my forgetting the Contest starts an hour earlier (local time) due to the shift last weekend from Daylight Saving Time to Standard Time. Decided to take a nap before the start and when I woke up thinking I still had an hour to get things ready, etc. By the time I realized my mistake, only two minutes remained before the Start of the Contest. So that is my excuse for messing up so much for the first hour or longer of the Contest: >)

The QTC aspect of the Contest adds an extra bit of strategy. Should you pass QTCs early, or save until later? Are band conditions good enough to efficiently pass QTCs? Will the other station even know what is meant by passing QTC or is he just passing out some points? And a number of other considerations that have to be mixed with trying to work as many different stations, etc.

Band	QSOs	QTCs	Mults
80:	275	40	54
40:	571	379	85
20:	540	719	80
15:	206	240	57
Total:	1592	1378	276
Score = 2,211,160			

The Solar numbers were as they have been since the beginning of the year. The first night (East Coast USA time) found 80 meters as quite as I have heard it for a long time. Forty QTCs were readily passed (UW8I, OK1KSL, DL3TD, DL8SCG—thanks). Eighty meters the second night seemed a bit more noisy.

Forty produced a couple of firsts for me - VU2NKS my first India station on 40 RTTY and passing QTCs with VK5NPR.

Twenty did give a nice run of stations including propagation good enough to pass QTCs with JR3NSC, JA6ZPR and 7N2UQC. Fifteen meters had openings to Europe each of the mornings for several hours. Heard 9K2HN with a very nice QSO number (over 2K) towards the end of the Contest. Also, thanks to 9K2HN for the four band contacts.

Tried 10 meters a couple of times without any success (no contacts). One caution, please make sure of the call of the station you are working. Several times I was identified as "K4GM" instead of "K4GMH". I know George, K4GM, was active in the Contest so it is easy to just grab the first call that comes up on the Super Check Partial that seems like one you may have seen on the screen. If you did by mistake put K4GM in your log instead of K4GMH you may lose credit for the QSO. Fortunately, this shouldn't impact my score. At least in scoring of some contests this is the case. Again, thanks to all who made this a very nice way to spend the weekend.

P40A (K0DQ) in the CQWW CW (November)

What a blast!

My last CQWW (and overseas op) was in 2004. That, plus a last minute decision to go, made for an interesting weekend of re-learning old lessons.

Band	QSOs	Zones	Countries
160:	79	12	30
80:	492	20	82
40:	1873	28	93
20:	2121	29	98
15:	1072	31	68
10:	10	3	6
Total:	5647	123	377
Score = 8,359,500			
Operating Time (hrs): 43.5			

This operation was my first from the P40A (John, KK9A) station in North Aruba, about a third of a mile east of the beach. Surprisingly, there are hills to the NE and NW but they don't seem to be an issue. John has an extremely well-engineered antenna farm on a small lot with existing antennas for 10-80 and they were connected and running in minutes with only minor issues.

The biggest outside challenge was to put up the 160 meter antenna (sort of an inverted L built on an existing 56 foot vertical and 13 radials) and a pennant for receive (which can charitably be described as 'slightly better than nothing'). It was the rainy season so some sort of low noise receiving antenna was highly desirable.

P40A (K0DQ) in the CQWW CW—contd., (November)

Equipment wise, I brought or borrowed everything. The P4 ham community is extremely gracious. Special thanks to Jacky, P43P, and to Andy, P49Y, for rounding out the SO2R station. We arrived Monday evening and I was still working minor details up to the starting bell, but - providentially - everything held together through the contest. As an aside, Donna and I also had a very enjoyable Thanksgiving dinner with Andy, P49Y, Joop, P43JB (& Yvonne), JP, P43A (& Christina) and - as a special treat - Carl, P49V, and Sue who are newly back in Aruba, putting up a new three tower station.

My strategy, such as it was, was driven by (1) the competition (which I understood to be John, P40W, and Bud, V26K, in this hemisphere) and (2) the station's capabilities. I knew I was at a significant disadvantage to both John and Bud on 160 and wasn't sure about 80. I also knew from past experience that John was the past master at multiplier production and rarely missed an opening. Finally, while I understood intellectually that it was the bottom of the sunspot cycle, I really didn't process the implications of more mults on 80 than 15 or NO/NO USA on 10. Period. My potential advantages were 3 points per W vs. 2 for Bud and SO2R to John's SO1R. The resultant plan was simple: run like a bandit and pick up what mults I could on the second radio.

Even though that was probably a blinding flash of the obvious, it was important to have it firmly implanted in my subconscious to avoid the natural DXer tendency to go on multiplier hunts. In general, I stayed with that plan, even in the face of hearing Bud and John both wildly running Europeans on 160.

The learning curve was steep, ranging from hardware ("where's the narrow filter switch on this rig and what's this VRF dealie") to software ("how come TO5X doesn't register as a mult"), not to mention "when is Europe workable on 160?"

I was also concerned about my stamina, having not attempted 40+ hours in a long time (ended up taking 4 hours off the second night and feeling pretty good at the checkered flag).

In the end, I felt good but had no real sense of how I'd done vs. the competition. The only benchmarks I had were Bud's winning score last year, John's all-time SOABLP record from sunnier days, and my own previous #2 and #3 HP efforts, also during higher sunspot periods. I knew I'd blown it by deciding to wait until the second night to focus on 160 (conditions were noticeably poorer Saturday night) and, particularly, by not moving multipliers.

I think I only moved 3 or 4 and, incredibly, worked V26K on only one band (160) and missed 8P5A on 3 bands.

All that said, it was one of the most enjoyable contests in memory. I was astounded at the ability to run on 40 meters and, in spite of having multipliers repeatedly "CQ in my face" on the low bands (and high bands on backscatter), I found the Low Power experience a treat, especially with two radios. The traditional after-contest dinner had the potential for an "Oscar envelope moment" right up to the point that John 'fessed up' he'd gone High Power after all. Then it was waiting to see how Bud did. At this moment, it appears the 3 point advantage did the trick in spite of his superb effort.

If it does turn into a #1 finish, it will cap a personal quest to win all six of the major contests (both modes CQ WW, CQ WPX, and ARRL DX). I suppose there'll be a personal "asterisk" since the others were all in the heavyweight (SOABHP) division, but a welterweight belt is better than none at all, especially at my age.

In any event, for me this is still a magical hobby. . . even at 64.

Blessings and thanks for the Q's

Rigs: FT-990; FT-1000 MK V;

Antennas: 4L monobanders on 10/15/20; 2 L Optibeam on 40; Inv V on 80; Inv L on 160;

W3IUU in the CQWW CW (November)

I am disappointed with my dipoles, especially 40 meters. This was my first serious CW DX contest effort with the FT-950, and I am happy with it compared with my Drake C-line. Variable bandwidth for CW receive is a great improvement. With this new transceiver, I can hear a lot more than I can work. Putting some messages into the 950's CW memory was a big help, especially in sending my call sign accurately!

Band	QSOs	Pts	Cty	ZN
3.5	54	131	32	13
7	66	174	45	16
14	315	883	91	28
21	61	167	40	20
28	3	6	3	2
Total	499	1361	211	79

Score : 394,690
Operating Time: 22.5 hours

I suspected that 20 would be the money band, and I was right. Highlights include working 8Q7DV for Zone 22 on 20, at about 1214Z, working UP2L on a skew path at about 2000Z, and having TF and EL answer my CQ. Also working 3X on 80 through 20. This was mostly S&P, but I can get a small run going on 20; the beam works very well.

Rig : FT-950

Antennas : 80 and 40 dipoles, KT34XA tribander at 60 feet.

KODQ (@W4RX) in the ARRL Sweepstakes CW (November)

7 hours in the chair. First SS in at least 35 years.

Well, guilt isn't the best motivator, but it works. After reading all the reflector traffic, I felt the call to duty to add some points, even though SS isn't high on my 'to do' list. Jim, W4RX, had major weekend antenna work going on up at the "Mountain Monster" station but - also hearing the call — got on Saturday night for a few hours, thus earning double merit badges as a participant and station host.

BAND	Raw QSOs	Valid QSOs	Points	Mults
80CW	330	327	654	11
40CW	26	26	52	1
20CW	222	222	444	65
Totals	578	575	1150	77

Operating time: 7 hours

I went up after church on Sunday, arriving about 1300. Jim had just received two new K-3's which we wired up for SO2R. After a skim of the 'quick start' instructions, I dove in. I'm sure I didn't begin to utilize the capabilities but the radios were 'sweet.'

Due to major rotor/antenna work problems on the big 20 and 40 antennas, the available higher band antennas were a tribander at something like 50 feet on 20 and a dipole on 40. Started on 20 and stayed for 2.5 hours. Then went to 80 where the slopers were large caliber weapons and stayed there to the end. Only 26 Q's on 40, almost all 2nd radio. Running still works. 77 mults, all but one of which called me. Missed VY1, VE6, and KY !?

First time I'd used TRlog in SS and had a few learning opportunities and glitches. Thankfully I never had to repeat my exchange on the second radio or it would not have been pretty.

Great to work W4KFC and W3GRF. Lots of great memories of operating from Lenny's in the late 70's and 80's. Fred played the role admirably. All we need is some software to emulate Lenny's swinging bug fist - something like a 5:1 dash/dot ratio. :->)

KE3Q in the ARRL Sweepstakes SSB (November)

It was really strange being home both SS weekends this year rather than being at WP3R in sunny, warm, Puerto Rico. It would have been tough to be away, though. I had "paying work" both weekends this time that would have given me tough choices to make while contesting in P.R. after going to so much trouble, time commitment and expense just to get there and back.

KE3Q in the ARRL Sweepstakes SSB — contd., (November)

I have a series of photos I want to post if I can ever get around to it, comparing the experience of SS in Puerto Rico to SS at home in Maryland. In P.R. there's sitting at the radio in a 7x9 equipment shelter with no windows -- pitch black inside even during bright daylight outside, unless a light is turned on. "Slogging it out" hour after hour is a challenge there. "Life" really exists in the virtual world inside your head and radio combination. "Radioworld."

By comparison, at home...playing catch with a football with my 8-year-old son on Friday, trick-or-treating Friday night (SS CW), getting an 8-point buck deer hunting Saturday morning, playing catch with a baseball and "mitts" on Saturday midday, then the on-going distractions during the contest, like when my 8-year-old daughter insisted on sitting on my lap while I was operating -- and she was holding two kittens too. And when I stop talking into the microphone to copy an exchange the family thinks that's the time they can talk to me. And during runs the XYL commands being called up the ham shack steps, "Rich, you absolutely MUST come here for 30 seconds!" Which I know from experience will be unlikely to be as little as 30 seconds. And my son doing imitation logging on a second computer -- which was networked -- which caused a glitch causing my QSO number to go from 300 to 3,000, which I couldn't figure out how to fix...

504 QSOs
80 sections
80,640 points

It's a mind boggling difference, to me, the lonely experience of making a long trip to guest op for SS all alone and far away somewhere, versus the distracted experience of attempting to operate at home.

As you might imagine, I was amused by and enjoyed everyone finding it challenging to find and work a KP4 this time. I know some of you didn't have such a tough time. At one point Sunday afternoon there were three KP4s CQing on 15, all pretty easy to work. NP4Z showed up pretty early in the contest running a logged a hundred or two, then came back again on Sunday for some more. I suppose all the KP4s combined who were on this time must have made 500-800 QSOs compared to WP3R's typical 2,500. But, hey, the mobile station in California who doesn't know what his section is, "What's a section?" isn't going for a sweep anyway, and the far-from-a-sweep guys are a big part of those 2,500. Anyway, everyone was kinda spoiled by 10 years of getting P.R. so easy. It was fun to hear the regular Puerto Ricans get a chance to take center stage and not be upstaged by el gringo.

Also interesting was how great 80M is "up here," since 80M was "not great" from P.R. versus the daytime high band options. So, down there I generally took all six hours off at night, which kept me off 80. This year I might have had to be on 80 some if was in P.R. I did make 400 or so from there in SS phone one year. Anyway, down there you do a lot better on 15 and 20 (and 10 in high sunspot years) and up here you do better on 80 anyway. 40 is important both there and here, low years and high years.

My antennas all worked well, though my tribanders SWR isn't 1:1 like it should be. I think it's a little better on the CW end. It's a "classic," Telrex TB5EM by the way, 18' boom, ahead of its time with "optimum spaced" full-sized reflectors for 10, 15 and 20, unlike its rivals in its day, the TA-33 and then the TH-3. I was out in the dark and wet Friday late tweaking the lengths of the 40 and 80 inv. V's 'til I got 'em pretty good, and they did work well. All three of my antennas were on one AB-577 portable mast, cranked up to 45' at the top. Amps: I have more amps than anyone I know but only one that's here (three are still in P.R.) and mostly working, a Ten-Tec Titan II. But it arcs and spits and smokes when I try it on 80. So, I was B power on 20 and 40, A power on 80, but U category when I went to the spotting to find the last sections. I sent B throughout. I wonder if anyone on 80 wondered why a B station was so weak. I know I'm not the only one with problems like these, so when you hear B, let's say, that doesn't mean he's really running high power right then.

Watching the clock come around to 21Z, getting my software going, I heard a North Dakota station working W1WEF on 20M with about 2 min. to go 'til the contest started. It sounded like it was the ND's frequency, and they agreed to be each other's QSO #1 and I jumped in and said I'd like to be next...well, it turned out it was W1WEF's frequency and ND would not or could not work me after their QSO #1.

KE3Q in the ARRL SS SSB — contd., (November)

But as I kept trying stations started calling me, so I worked 'em, got a run going right over the top of W1WEF, who was also working stations at least as fast as I was, but I succeeded in chasing him off freq. Hey, serves you right for working ND for QSO #1 and then not letting him have the freq -- or at least pause a moment to let me get a QSO in! I would have! -- anyway, Jack did go down half a kHz after a while and due to the propagation we were both pretty weak with each other....and when I worked him on Sunday I did apologize for stealing his frequency and Jack said, "Are you really sorry?" Answer, well no, because it worked out well for me, but I was sorry to rip off a nice guy. Also, missing part of the story, it was 14151.

On 14151 I proceeded to get 100 rates for the first hour and a half or two, 'til it seemed like 20 was getting too long to maintain rate, so I went to 40 and did pretty well there too. So I started asking myself, "Should I get serious and try to go 24 hours?" But no... And I knew when I went to 80 I'd be barefoot.

When I did go to 80 I didn't try to fight for a frequency in 3800-3810 but quickly found one down near 3700, much quieter than "up there" anyway so arguably better regardless of how rock crushing loud you are... and I got a real good run going on 80. 80 was also very runnable even with low power on Sunday too. So, that kinda worked out. But, if I'd had the real 2000W PEP 80 should have been super good.

So...back to 21Z and North Dakota...I didn't get that guy. AND North Dakota was the only section I was left needing when I had worked the other 79! Bummer. So, the first sections I TRIED to work became the last sections I worked. When I finally hooked up with ND late Sunday it was the same guy, NOGF. Got him high on 40. Actually, he should have been another 800 Hz away from the top band edge than he was. With my little poking around in the contest effort, I needed the "cluster" and some "finds" by WM30 to get the sweep, which I didn't think I'd get, but eventually did. The VY1EI pileup on 20 was pretty easy to break once my amp warmed up. My fixed tribander heading of 285 or so worked fine for VY. I was also missing Santa Barbara (wildfires keeping some guys off I guess), Alabama and SNJ late in the contest. It was tough working close-in places, including other MDC stations and VA, with skip so long, even on 80! Amazing.

I knew WM30 had his new full legal limit amp courtesy of W4MYA and their "Meet you in the middle somewhere" amplifier pass Saturday, and with Steve and I both having low inv. Vs on 80 I figured he'd be loud here. Nope, really weak. Where does all that signal go!? Likewise you MDC-ers and VA-ians operating from the big multi-tower and stacks stations...all pretty weak. When I heard K3MIM operating from W3LPLCing on 3833 and working people, plus lots of adjacent station QRM, I thought, "I'm not even going to call, because she's not going to hear me." And I did call once and, not surprisingly, got beat out by some West Coast station. I went back to my run on 3734 and later 3600-something, both of which frequencies stayed pretty clear and had good rates. I second-VFO'd to K3MIM a little later and she was louder-- knowing she was at "da big station" I figure she probably switched to a different antenna. Nice to have that option! So she heard me that time and we got a QSO.

An interesting thing....WM30 was enjoying his new amp and high power but couldn't figure out why he couldn't hold a frequency up in kilowatt alley...his run up there wasn't going too well and he was frustrated. Meantime, here I was with 150W output having a good run on a quiet frequency lower down. And my antenna was very similar to his too. Also, of course I try to start with a quiet frequency, as quiet as I can find. But after a while the guys I can hear to the left and right clear out a little more to give me space and the run frequency improves. You notice this a lot when you're REALLY LOUD, great antenna, high power, but I didn't really expect it with low power and a 45' high inv. V. I don't know if it's that they recognized my call and wanted to stay out of my way or what. Anyway, I told the frustrated Steve he could have my frequency, 3734. I went off S&P'ing and eventually started CQing on an equally good, equally quiet, 3673. Good rate, quiet, my "neighbors" edged away giving me even more space and more quiet. By the way, on both freqs I don't even know who my neighbors were, didn't bother to check. (Oh, I did try 3803-3804 for a while when I found it vacant and did get until N8II worked me then started CQing above me.

KE3Q in the ARRL Sweepstakes SSB — contd., (November)

I'm not complaining; he didn't crowd me, but it seemed like no one could copy me after that. If I had had the KW he probably would have stayed farther away and everyone could have heard me through him too. So, I took my lumps and went back down to where I belonged, with the little pistols.)

So, maybe it's that WM3O isn't widely enough known yet among that contesters, the Rodney Dangerfield factor, "I don't get no respect!" or what. I think it's safe to say this: Contest more and become better known by more contesters and it doesn't hurt. And my callsign has mostly been off the air for the last 10 years, since I've guest op'd at A61AJ, W3LPL (those two not lately) and WP3R, so there are lots of guys who've never heard of KE3Q... anyway...

Bottom line: It was a good thing to break the ice from this QTHG, really the first contest operations from here in the 6-1/2 years I've lived here. Now if I had a little more paying work and the markets would go back up, etc....maybe I could justify the expense of concrete and putting up towers! But...at least in SS, a single 50' tower or mast for a tribander and wires, you can do very well. I also felt a feeling of accomplishment to get some homebrew amps and power supplies and racks hauled up from the garage to the ham shack. I feel like I'm a rung or two up the ladder now... It's a tall ladder, maybe a 40-footer. hihi

N3KS in the ARRL 160 (December)

The semi-famous balloon vertical made a re-appearance in this contest. A couple of weeks ago I had built a permanent 160m inverted L, but I was not happy with how it played.

QSOs = 1402
Sections = 77
Countries = 46
Total Score = 408,360
Operating Time (hrs): 22
Radios: S02R

So, as a last minute decision at 4PM Friday, I threw a balloon up in its place. It seemed to work very well - I had around 45 of 100ft ground radials underneath it.

I was not able to repair my west and northwest beverages in time for the contest, so compared to what I become used to with beverage receive listening, I felt relatively deaf to the west. I turned away a lot of stations that I could not pull out

of the noise in that direction. For some reason my QTH is pretty noisy on 160m, and listening on the vertical was pretty rough.

Fortunately my EU beverage was fine.

Things went pretty well the first night, I went straight from start to about 3AM EST Friday night and did not have an hour less than 100/hr until midnight. I slept in Saturday morning, so missed all the good stuff in the early AM (one of these years I will work a JA on 160) and then got back in the saddle around 5PM Saturday afternoon. That was a bit late to the party - first clear spot I found was above 1850. It was pretty much a 60+/- /hr medium grind through Saturday night, and I ended the contest at about 2:30AM EST Saturday night and did not continue/return for the early morning Sunday fun.

I typically don't operate 160m that much, so am not sure if conditions were good or not. About 180 non-US/VE stations made it into the log, so I'm thinking things were not too bad.

Thanks to everyone who worked me, to N3ST for some great stuff, WX3B for (always) good packet cluster chat when things were slow, and it was nice to see K3LP make a rare 160m appearance very late Saturday night.

N8II in the ARRL 10 (December)

Bottom line, no matter how low the solar flux, there's always life in good old 10 meters! Sporadic E and meteor scatter saved the day along with surprisingly good F2 + Es linked to F2 and TE to deep SA. The SA openings were better than last year, I made 28 Q's with PY and 23 with LU.

Mode	QSOs	Mults
CW:	330	46
SSB:	513	54
Total:	843	100
Score = 233,600		
Operating Time (hr): ~15		

I knew going into the contest that with Xmas on the doorstep, I didn't have a free pass to play radio for the weekend. Also expecting dismal condx, I didn't plan on spending much time in the test. Friday evening validated my decision with the poorest start I can ever remember. The locals weren't on in big numbers and there were only a few brief meteor scatter bursts to the west.

Saturday morning was much the same with better MS, and seem to remember Es to VE1/9, QRT'd from 1340-2100Z to chauffeur wife around shopping, mainly for groceries, lot's of toting around, you know the drill. I turned on the radio at 21Z to find Es in to Atlantic Canada and mucho grande strength PY's and LU's. I even ran a few and added PJ2, P4, and VP5, KP2, KP4 via probably double hop Es as the band was open to south FL on Es (rate was 69/hr). By 23Z, things were pretty slow and the band nearly dead, I returned at 24Z to find some Es to what appeared to be only south FL and still some PY's and LU's; they continued being logged very slowly until around 0215Z! Around 01Z, the opening expanded to all of FL, GA, AL, TN, LA, MS and a few O's; I got a serious run going on phone working mostly FL and finished up the 02Z hour with 77 Q's.

Sunday morning was a struggle early with almost no activity at 1215Z, fired up in earnest around 13Z to find only some meteor scatter and locals. Just as I was heeding the breakfast call, there was an Es opening into VE1/VE9/VY2 which expanded to VE2; I started feeling a decent score coming on and moved first station a VE2 on CW to phone. A CT3 called in for only AF. Then, just as things started to get slow, the meteor scatter seemed to improve to the west. Sorry! You gotta be fast guys to make a QSO; and sometimes that doesn't help, barely missed VE3UTT, sorry!

Then some Es developed into MN (38 Q's total) and IA at first, expanding into all of O-land (just 1 ND Q and 3 VE4's, moved 1 to CW) except CO eventually with many AR (worked about 18 total), east TX (33 Q's), IL (22 Q's, WB9Z never made the Es opening). 16Z rate was 95.

Around 17Z, I started alternating CQ's between west working MN/IA and south (have 2 el Force 12 fixed south) working FL. MN died down around 1730 and swung the "mighty" 5 el yagi around to FL and considering the already large number of FL stations logged, had an incredible run into there for 20-25 minutes. I was guessing the Es footprint on this end was small, but K2PS was running' them same time, so guess it was just loud sig + rare state on my end that brought them in (rate was 117!). Total FL Q's were 151! I operated thru until about 1845Z working 74 in the 3/4 hour, and the opening to AZ/CA kept me going. The only decent strength AZ was WA7NB who popped out of the noise to S7 1/2 kHz below my run freq. K6NR was first CA (I think he has been first before) on CW; I stuck around about 4-5 minutes on CW catching UT, 2 weak AZ, and a few CA, then QSY'd to phone to seek my left coast fortune, but most signals were weak and after I quit getting CA answers around 1840Z, a quick sweep from 28435 down to 28400 found no CA and very few sigs. Total CA Q's were 27, I suspect via double hop Es as NE and KS were booming in at the same time. Just a couple of CO were added during the same period. After that it was QRT for Xmas tree and visit to mom's, I made about 14 more Q's in 22Z hour including N5PR in NM, the band died around 2230Z.

Again, as evidenced by the large turnouts from FL, locals VA (90 Q's and could have milked out more), MD-68, and AL-20 and AR-18, contest activity seems to be on the rise; 2000-3000 Q's are just around the upturn of the cycle corner for this one! I had dumb luck taking Saturday daytime off and operating Sunday when condx were better. New England activity seemed to be down and condx were never open to there while I was on; I hope you all are warm and cozy again after the ice storm. Try operating sometime with 3/4 inch of ice on the yagi, 10M yagis become a CB band antenna.

N8II in the ARRL 10 - contd., (December)

Running on phone was more fun than S&P and running on CW, so I stuck to phone whenever rates were good; phone activity was very poor compared to CW during the "lean" hours. Compared to last year, my score was up about 50K; FL and SA and a few more good hours made the difference.

Many thanks for all of the Q's; this fall season turned out not to be the bummer I was guessing it would be.

Mark Your Contesting Calendar

(from WB7HBM's website: www.hornucopia.com)

Sep 12-13	WAE DX Contest, SSB
Sep 26-27	CQ Worldwide DX Contest, RTTY
Oct 24-25	CQ Worldwide DX Contest, SSB
Nov 7-9	ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, CW
Nov 14-15	WAE DX Contest, RTTY
Nov 21-Nov 23	ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, SSB
Nov 28-Nov 29	CQ Worldwide DX Contest, CW
Dec 4-Dec 6	ARRL 160-Meter Contest
Dec 12-Dec	ARRL 10-Meter Contest

K3MM (@N3HBX) in the ARRL RTTY Roundup (January)

First serious contest effort using N1MM/MMTTY and with Elecraft K3's.

After about 6 hours finally got in a groove with MM. Still make some gaffs now and then, but it's getting better... Stacking calls for tail end QSOs worked fairly well once the operator was doing the right things!

Band	QSOs
80:	491
40:	757
20:	619
15:	178
10:	0
Total:	2045
State/Prov = 57	
Countries = 68	
Score = 255,625	
Operating Time (hrs): 24	

Having a good database to work from on the fly (thanks K4GMH) and MMTTY doing a good job of parsing them really helped pull them out of the mud. A big advantage over my old WF1B software... probably makes up for the loss of RITTY decoder on the old hardware.

15 was even worse than expected. Worked one F and one EA from EU. That was it. Didn't bother looking at 10 since there are no band mults. P49X was smokin' on 15 though...running EU all by himself on 15 at 1330Z on 21085 with a BIG number! I went back to 20;

40... ho hum.

Found multiple TX mod problems with the K3's using AFSK.

Hopefully they will be fixed before WPX next month. Basic receiver works nice, but they need to work on cleaning up the DSP and TX audio or it'll end up with the same bad rap (justified or otherwise) as the Orion. I'd give up ALL those cute bells and whistles for a rock-solid kick-ass contest radio... a cleaner MP. I'm afraid it ain't quite there yet.

N3UM in the CQ 160 CW (January)

Best Results in 9 years

My 9th straight year doing CQ WW 160 CW: my best claimed score by 33%! Previous

	QSOs	Points	Mults
W/K	577	1154	48
VE	47	235	8
EU	76	760	31
Other DX	18	135	17
Total	718	2284	104

Score: 237,536
Operating Time: 16 hr

best was in 2004: this year only 4% more QSOs but 15% more QSO points and 16% more multipliers than in '04. The difference was all due to DX: in '04 I got only 98 QSOs and 42 multipliers outside W/K, vs. 141 QSOs and 56 mults this year.

In contrast, the 577 U.S. QSOs and 48 states I worked this year were completely unremarkable: for the past 5 years my U.S. QSO totals have varied from 542 to 595 QSOs and from 46 to 48 states: for me and my station and QTH, this clearly represents/K saturation. My VE results this

year were OK vs. recent years, with 47 QSOs in 8 provinces, but again unremarkable: I worked 44 to 50 VEs in 5 to 8 provinces in the last 3 years.

So why did I work so much more DX this year? Operator and HPA were the same, and radios essentially so (Orion '03-'05, Orion II '06 and after). Operating hours were actually down a bit: 16 hr. this year, vs. 17 to 18.5 hr. in recent years. I put up a somewhat better antenna before the '07 contest, but my '07 and '08 scores were each below that of '04.

So, my record score this year had to be due to outstanding propagation, especially to DX. All other factors were much the same. During the contest and for several days before and after, sunspot counts were zero and A index was 1, suggesting the F layer was smooth and happy and the D layer thin and unhappy. The good conditions brought out lots of activity

I would be interested in comments from other PVRC ops on how their CQ160 CW results this year differed from those over the previous 5 years or so. Did you work noticeably more DX this year? Also: have you noticed a saturation effect for W/K QSOs like I have? If so, how does your QSO saturation level compare with my 542 to 595 over the past 5 years? Such comparisons might suggest how much difference station and operator make, since our QTHs are all in The Circle. One operator factor is that I don't stay up past 0230 or 0300 EST, and sleep in until broad daylight, so those who operate all night or power-nap and get on again at 0600 EST might make more U.S. QSOs.

NS3T in the CQ 160 CW (January)

What a fun time that was on the bands, eh? I had zero plans to do anything of note in this contest, because we have a now 2-week old baby boy on our hands at my QTH, and so staying up all night to do radio doesn't really work!

QSOs = 511
State/Prov = 53
Countries = 30
Score = 125,994

Instead, I was able to play for a few hours here and there and stumbled into a pretty good European opening on Saturday night, where I was able to S&P my way to 42 EU contacts, which is pretty good for my little inverted L in the backyard.

I was interested to note K3ZO's strategy of working lots of DX first. I can CQ on 160 no problem and work lots of US and Canadian stations. But the Europeans aren't going to call me. I must go out and get them myself....so that's pretty much what I did on Saturday night. I'm sure it cost me a chance to get NT0V to stop by with ND or K0TO from ID, but those are the breaks.

I worked six new countries over the weekend, giving me 74 overall - not bad for 100 watts. I also got two new zones, as I worked KL7RA for Zone 1 - the first time I've ever heard Alaska on 160. I also worked a UT7 for Zone 16.

It was great to hear all the PVRC guys on, especially those who dropped by at the end of the contest. I might get on for one of the NA Sprints in February, but I will definitely be on for ARRL CW a bit and then CQ 160 SSB.

NS3T in the CQ 160 CW—contd., (January)

It was great to hear all the PVRC guys on, especially those who dropped by at the end of the contest. I might get on for one of the NA Sprints in February, but I will definitely be on for ARRL CW a bit and then CQ 160 SSB.

K3ZO in the January VHF Sweepstakes

I was looking forward to this contest with great anticipation. The venerable FT-726R and

Band	QSO	Grids
6 m	25	8
2 m	27	12
Totals	52	20

Score: 1,040

the ancient Johnson Thunderbolt 6N2 were operating fine thanks to the good work of W2YR and KC3VO. The rotor for the six and two meter beams had been fixed thanks to W3MC. And the high SWR on the 2 meter beam had been conquered, again thanks to W3MC cleaning up a hardline-to-standard coax bridge up on the tower.

No sooner had I declared to W3ZZ, my first QSO in the contest, that "It's nice to have a rotor again" than it began to act up, finally deciding to move only counter-clockwise and never clockwise, which means I ended up stuck southwest near the counter-clockwise stop. This sort of took the wind out of my sails and I didn't spend much time in the contest after all.

Best DX: WD4JQV in EM94 on 2 meters.

N2QT in the CQ 160 SSB (February)

Well, I had my some of my highest rates as well as my lowest (6/hr for the last 2 hours on Sunday!). I miss the opportunity to run SO2R (I tried SO2V but it's just not the same). It just seems hard to sit there and CQ when you haven't had a call in 3-4 minutes.

Band	QSOs	Pts	Sta	Cty
1.8	852	2316	56	36
Total	852	2316	56	36

Score: 213,072

Time: 21:50

After running several contests at LP it was nice to be able to break pileups quickly (as well as having stations call that I could barely hear). It was also nice that the shack was comfortably warm compared to running LP!

The 87A would decide to periodically tune to some frequency out of band and shut down, but nothing broke.

SD was the last state in continental US. No Alaska or Hawaii.

Rig: Yaesu FT1000 MKV field, Alpha 87A

Antenna: shunt fed tower, switchable EWEs on receive.

N3HBX in the CQ 160 SSB (February)

Since building the contest station I seem to do more maintenance/repair than operating! However, I have tried to do the CQ 160-meter SSB contest each year to keep my hand in, and last year came in 3rd in the U.S. (1st in the fifth call area)! No such luck this time....

Results: 1118 Qs, 58 States, 24 Countries Score: 218,694
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It requires a certain masochistic streak to do this one - so many loud stations trying to squeeze into the lower 100 kHz of the band! I did not take kindly to the operator at

K1TTT squeezing to just 1 kHz above me and told him so - to no effect! Wonder what he has for an RX antenna?

Other problems included total loss of mains power Saturday morning around 4:30 a.m. (sending me to bed early) and a high noise level Sunday morning (snow static?) again sending me to bed early! Apart from that conditions were not particularly good and the score reflects it.

N4ZR in the ARRL DX CW (February)

Knowing that my neck problems would prevent anything like a full-time operation, I decided to live a normal weekend life, except for operating sessions in the morning and afternoon. That meant stopping for lunch and dinner, almost no operating during hours of darkness (early Sunday AM only), and only about 16 hours of operating time. I decided to use the contest mainly as a chance to test various tactics for using CW Skimmer - I did not use an internet cluster.

The results were pretty gratifying. My overall rate of 93.5 QSOs/hour is the best I've ever

Band	QSOs	Mults
160:	45	33
80:	94	52
40:	462	73
20:	1212	105
15:	96	32
10:	40	15
Total:	1949	310

Score = 1,811,640
Operating Time: 38 hours

sustained in an ARRL DX contest, and I had a 147 hour Sunday morning on 20. Skimmer caught the brief 15 meter opening on Saturday morning, and I used it in vain looking for another on Sunday. Most of the time, Skimmer was on the same band as my second radio, looking for S&P QSOs (and particularly multipliers). That allowed it to work while I was running on the other radio, and it found more stations than I could possibly work, given the run rates and my limited SO2R skills.

However, the most useful tactic, I found, was to take the "opportunity" of losing a run frequency to survey my current run band and see if there were enough new running stations to warrant a quick S&P sweep of the band. Typically, 2 minutes spent with Skimmer on an open band would produce spots of 200-275 stations (most of them dupes, of course). I would then swap radios (Alt-F5 in N1MM Logger), and move quickly up or down the band working the non-dupes. Doing this, it was common to see my rate-meter at 150+ for the last 10 QSOs, which made S&P this way almost as productive as running on a good frequency. On Sunday afternoon, I did a lot of this, trying to boost my multiplier total, and found it interesting to see the new waves of CQers show up on a given band, confirming what we know from experience to be true.

The European pileups were horrific - they sounded like packet pileups to me, judging by the sudden onset, but looking at DX Summit I was surprised by how few times I was actually spotted (though I wonder if some European clusters are limited in their spot distribution to national boundaries). Perhaps it was just the ruckus on the run frequency that attracts people.

K3ZO in ARRL DX CW (February)

I didn't have a chance to rest Friday because Verizon was here all afternoon installing our FIOS. So the contest period found me taking naps at unusual times like 1310 to 1440 UTC on Saturday morning and 1930 to 2130 UTC Saturday afternoon.

Band	QSOs	Pts	Cty
1.8	1	3	1
3.5	12	36	10
7	394	1176	63
14	1065	3183	94
21	20	60	14
Total:	1492	4458	182

Score: 811,356

I awoke from a nap at 0900 UTC Saturday morning expecting do some S&P into the Caribbean and Pacific on 160, 80 and 40, but when I heard loud Europeans still coming through on 40 at that hour I found a run frequency -- at that time much easier than usual because almost all the BC stations had signed off -- and promptly ran 118 Europeans that hour, the last European in the log at 0956 UTC. Europeans that hour, the last European in the log at 0956 UTC. The frequency was crystal clear and while most of the Europeans were fairly weak, they were very easy to copy with no QRM of any kind around. Some were surprisingly far east like RA3CM at 0953; that's six hours past his sunrise! ON8WW sent me a wav file of my signal during that run and there I was, all alone on a completely clear channel, nothing at all heard except my voice.

So Sunday I made sure to hit the European sunrise opening on 40 and had another good run, but I started a lot earlier when the BC stations were still on, and interestingly enough the background level was considerably higher though I had a clear frequency. I detected some signs of receiver overload and I guess I must have settled down with a loud BC station within the pass-band of the Orion's roofing filter. Next time I'll have to look more carefully.

K3ZO in ARRL DX CW—contd., (February)

I had a good run to Japan/East Asia on 20 Saturday afternoon 2130-2330 with about 90 Asians logged during that time, mixed in with Caribbean/South Americans calling in off the back and a number of KL7's as well. Nice to have the 6-el 20 meter Telrex and 8-el 15 meter Telrex Yagis at 150+ feet rotatable again thanks to good work on the prop pitch by Mike, W3MC.

Thanks to Frank, W3LPL mentioning in his run-down of the CW weekend that 10 opened about 2100 the second day. So I started listening to 10 carefully on Sunday at that hour, and sure enough there was HI3K and a few LU's. I worked all I heard and went back to 20; but I kept checking 10 and finally the band opened wide to most of Central and South America and the Caribbean. Nice to have a few six-band QSOs in the log for a change.

In the old days at W3AU and W4BVV we used to joke that the tremendous activity during major contests made the MUF higher as the contest went on. Maybe there's something to it given the way the bands acted in both weekends of the ARRL Tests. With the tremendous amount of RF being pumped at the ionosphere by the SWBC stations and others it wouldn't seem likely that ham-type power levels could make a difference, but maybe these signals, always being there, establish some kind of steady-state floor and our activities boost that level with some kind of flywheel effect during the contest period. Who knows?

Anyway, lots of fun! Looking forward to the Wisconsin QSO Party this weekend where I have a chance to exchange numbers with my fellow Cheeseheads and Packer fans, and then RDXC next weekend.

NN3W (@N3HBX) in the ARRL DX CW (February)

As always, my thanks to N3HBX for inviting me to the Poolesville farm. Nothing broken, no casualties, and the K3s are great on CW. Between them and the Orions, there is clearly a renaissance in American built (or assembled) radios.

Band	QSOs	Mults
160:	98	58
80:	407	71
40:	1261	100
20:	1376	102
15:	297	69
10:	6	5

Total:	3445	405
Total Score = 4,182,030		
Operating Time (hrs): 44		
Radios: SO2R		

My goal was to beat the 2008 SOHP score. I did that, but I don't think I am alone. I am sure that K1KI, K3CR (LZ4AX), K5ZD and VY2ZM will have some tremendous scores... Will be lucky to make top 5 in this one.

Terrific conditions on the low bands; good conditions on 20; garbage on 15 and 10 save for one decent, short lived opening to EU both mornings on 15.

The 80 meter wire yagi is dead from before the contest, so I had the lazy H running, but I couldn't get things going right. Had some folks CQ in my face, and had a lot of ??3W replies. Ugh.

40 just kept going and going and going.

20 was quite good with loud JAs each evening. And I mean LOUD.

15 had an EU opening each morning that didn't last.

Highlights:

- Working EL2DX on 5 bands but 10 meters was not one of them.
- Working the YN on all 6!
- Working VKs at 2100z on 40 LP and then Gs/PAs, DLs at 1000z.
- Having a station in Guam call me on 15 meters long path on Saturday. Where did that come from???????
- Seeing the 10Q rate meter at close to 300 at one point.
- Feeling comfortable with SO2R to reliably have strings of QSOs on alternating bands to a rate of over 100 an hour.
- Packet: I can tell exactly when I get spotted. And I can tell when somebody busts my call on packet. I can also tell when something that I'm trying to work has just been spotted and my

NN3W (@N3HBX) in the ARRL DX CW—contd., (February)

Lowlights:

- My performance on 160 and 80 still stinks. I need to divorce myself temporarily from 40.
- Packet: I can tell exactly when I get spotted. And I can tell when somebody busts my call on packet. I can also tell when something that I'm trying to work has just been spotted and my competition went from 5 to 25. The dependence on packet is leading I think to dependency on it instead of S&P skills.
- Dupes: as noted above, I had well over 100 of them. Many of them 6 or 7 in a row which is owed to busted spots.
- 160 meter pileups are out of control. Nobody ever shuts up.
- Thinking that 20 meters was dead but then realizing that I had the receiver set to the auxiliary setting reserved for low band beverages. OOPS.

W3ZZ in the CQ WPX RTTY (February)

These are my first RTTY contacts in 49 years. The last were done with a Viking Ranger, modified HQ170 and a Model 19 Teletype machine. My intention was to get on and give a few RTTY folks like W3LL and K4GMH who work me in VHF contests an RTTY contact. K4GMH was my first contact but Bud W3LL was on vacation so he will have to wait till next time. I did not expect to do more than call a few people and consider this my learning curve but the second day I did run stations at over 60/hr.

BAND	QSO	PFX	POINTS
80	78	46	200
40	153	105	550
20	375	180	752
15	6	4	15
10	0	0	0
TOTAL	612	335	1517
SCORE:	508,195		
Operating time:	15 hours		

I can see where SO2R really would increase the rate but there is no room for additional antennas at this location. All and all an interesting experience!

K3ZO in the ARRL DX SSB (March)

I didn't have a chance to rest Friday because Verizon was here all afternoon installing our FIOS. So the contest period found me taking naps at unusual times like 1310 to 1440 UTC on Saturday morning and 1930 to 2130 UTC Saturday afternoon.

I awoke from a nap at 0900 UTC Saturday morning expecting do some S&P into the Caribbean and Pacific on 160, 80 and 40, but when I heard loud Europeans still coming through on 40 at that hour I found a run frequency -- at that time much easier than usual because almost all the BC stations had signed off -- and promptly ran 118 Europeans that hour, the last European in the log at 0956 UTC. The frequency was crystal clear and while most of the Europeans were fairly weak, they were very easy to copy with no QRM of any kind around. Some were surprisingly far east like RA3CM at 0953; that's six hours past his sunrise! ON8WW sent me a wav file of my signal during that run and there I was, all alone on a completely clear channel, nothing at all heard except my voice.

Band	QSOs	Mults
160:	45	33
80:	94	52
40:	462	73
20:	1212	105
15:	96	32
10:	40	15
Total	1949	310
Total Score =	1,811,640	
Operating Time:	38 hours	

So Sunday I made sure to hit the European sunrise opening on 40 and had another good run, but I started a lot earlier when the BC stations were still on, and interestingly enough the background level was considerably higher though I had a clear frequency. I detected some signs of receiver overload and I guess I must have settled down with a loud BC station within the passband of the Orion's roofing filter. Next time I'll have to look more carefully.

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K3ZO in the ARRL DX SSB—contd., (March) :

Nice to have the 6-el 20 meter Telrex and 8-el 15 meter Telrex Yagis at 150+ feet rotatable again thanks to good work on the prop pitch by /Mike, W3MC.

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Anyway, lots of fun! Looking forward to the Wisconsin QSO Party this weekend where I have a chance to exchange numbers with my fellow Cheeseheads and Packer fans, and then RDXC next weekend.

K4ZW in CQ WPX SSB (March)

Slightly surpassed last year's score. Don't know if that's good or not. I had not planned on putting in a full effort. In fact there is a 49 minute gap during 01 UTC the first night when I stopped operating to watch the Capitals hockey game on TV. I should have waited another 11 minutes and used it as off time. At some point I got hooked into the game and then there

Band	QSOs
160:	10
80:	349
40:	484
20:	1767
15:	145
10:	0
Total:	2755
Prefixes =	1003
Score =	7,449,281
Operating Time (hrs):	36

comes another point where you have enough time invested and you hate to walk away.

WPX is all about running and at this point in the cycle that means grinding it out on 20 meters, at times with 2 and 3 people on the same frequency. Not much fun in that. So I think I'll take a break from SSB contesting until this fall and WW DX SSB.

WX3B in the CQ WPX SSB (March)

That's what I call a great weekend of fun, talking to your friends all over the world and playing radio for the entire weekend!

Band	QSOs
160:	139
80:	562
40:	1140
20:	1490
15:	246
10:	49
Total:	3626
Prefixes =	1093
Score =	8,337,404
Operating Time (hrs):	45

I have been enthusiastic about this contest for many years, and this year we got to test out several new toys at WX3B including the new reversible beverages, the K9AY beverage box on 80 and 160, and an interlocked second station on 20 meters. Everything worked GREAT!

Congratulations to the individuals that made up team WX3B this year; they are truly the ones responsible for this score. This event had one open band during the day, and two useful bands at night. After operating the big contests at the world's finest contest station (W3LPL), I was delighted to 'sit this one out' and let the team do most of the work.

WX3B in the CQ WPX SSB—contd., (March)

Bill, K3WI did a stellar job in the slug-fest known as 20 meters. It is particularly difficult at this time of year since the WX3B opening is about an hour or two later than more competitive stations with a high antenna. A lion's share of the credit for the 20m score goes to Bill - who stuck like GLUE to the chair on 20.

It warmed my heart to see Dennis N8IVN cheerfully CQing into dead bands and scraping up QSOs on 15 meters - he was later rewarded with some time on 75 meters.

Aaron, KB3RAE learned how to CQ on 75 meters and listen with credibility to two frequencies at once. We had fun working Europeans down the band and USA on our TX frequency. Thanks to Tom N11N for reminding me to do this.

Joe, N3YIM got the "tough duty" award this weekend. He wasn't awarded much in the way of active bands, however he did tear up 10 meters when it opened to the south on Sunday. Way to stamp on those red spots, Joe!

Tony, N3FX was welcomed back to team WX3B after a few years off. He also started off timesharing on less than idea bands, however he also got "rewarded" with 40 meters during a good European opening Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon.

Eric, KA3ITJ is back contesting after a long break and is quite enthusiastic about it. In fact, during the final hours at WX3B I heard mention of putting up an AB/577 and directional yagi. Eric also put in tireless hours trying to wake up activity in bands that shall we say, didn't have too much happening on them. It was Eric's second PVRC meeting and he will be voted into membership ASAP!

Bryan, N3ST is responsible for greatly improving the 75m transmit dipole at WX3B. He claims he didn't do anything, however I claim the antenna is 10db louder than before we measured the coax loss! Brian had fun on 75m during the first evening.

Mike, N3VOP joined the party just in time to watch the power go out. Yes, that's right, about 4 hours from the end of the contest, we watched the yagis doing their "spaghetti dance" as the wind comes up to 30+ mph gusts, then come the Thunderstorms, then the hail! Next comes the lightning, and the plug gets pulled at WX3B right before the power gets unstable and eventually goes out completely. Bummer, that took us off the air for about 2.5 hours.

After hauling out the portable generator and getting 20 & 40 going, we pounced on a few guys just because...we could!

Well after the power came back, Mike was rewarded handsomely with a high rate stateside run, followed by a some JA's calling, then BD....HS0....RW0...E21...boy it was a DXers dream right before the end of the contest. We thought that we had broken the old WX3B record set in 2006, however upon re-scoring the contest, I noticed that the score was just below our record effort. We're figuring this contest out, however because our low band totals are getting better and our percentage of Europeans on 20 is getting much higher.

Congratulations to my good friend and radio Partner Kam, N3KS who had a his personal best effort and actually slugged it out as a single-operator, unassisted in this contest!

Operators: WX3B, K3WI, N8IVN, KA3ITJ, KB3RAE, N3YIM, N3FX, N3ST, N3VOP

K3ZO in the Russian DX Contest (March)

I was ready to start the contest with the 6-el Yagi at 150 feet pointed just a bit east of straight north, figuring to try to get the Asian Russians in the log while the band was still open to

Band	CW Qs	Ph Qs	Countries	Oblasts
160:	34	0	20	2
80:	163	6	36	14
40:	426	46	60	18
20:	533	57	53	40
15:	8	0	4	1
Total:	1164	109	173	75
Score =	1,645,494			

them. But the aurora screech on the Asian signals, indicating a disturbance in progress, led me to put the beam back on Europe sooner than I had expected. Indeed as it turned out the K index was 3 at that time.

I had also expected to run more Europeans on 20 SSB than I ended up doing. I just wasn't getting much going up there so since CW wanted to produce I went with the flow.

K3ZO in the Russian DX Contest—contd., (March)

Unfortunately the neighbor's plasma TV, which is normally switched off at midnight or so, stayed on during the whole contest this time, making 40 less of a pleasant experience than I had hoped, since the RFI peaks right in line with Europe. And just before and during sunrise, when I had hoped to do a bit of business in the Far East, thunderstorms in the upper mountain west caused just enough of a bother to make reception of signals in that direction a bit unpleasant, though the likes of BA4ALC and YE1ZAT did go into the log. On 40 SSB the QRN also kept me from pulling through all but one of the VK Foundation licensees with their four-letter suffixes and 10 watts power. There were several others calling. A number of regular VKs did go into the log, however, along with a very loud H44MS.

Eighty meters was really good to Europe including UA1, 3, 4 and 6, and was very seductive, so I stayed there longer than perhaps I should have. Even UA9CDV heard me.

The 160 meter band was also quiet with a number of loud European signals, and they were hearing me OK; I think the percentage of time I had to repeat my serial number on 160 was less than what I had to do on 80. ZC4LI was a nice catch there -- I caught him calling CQ and with no pile-up.

W4PM in the CQ WPX CW (May)

After seeing the outstanding score posted by the guys at NR4M it appears a fellow's take on

Band	QSOs
160:	2
80:	61
40:	184
20:	214
15:	83
10:	13
Total:	557
Prefixes =	324
Total Score =	416,664
Operating Time (hrs):	11

propagation directly relates to the antennas he has in the air! The "BIG GUNS" seem to make their own propagation. Here's a report from a "little pistol" with limited antennas and limited time to play. At least I did make at least one contact on every band. :-)

I only had a few hours to play. Our daughter gave birth to our first grandchildren (twins) on Friday afternoon. I managed to get about 11 hours of chair time mostly CQing and a little S&P. No effort was made to search for multipliers. I just took what I ran across. 40m was my best DX band. 20m propagation was rather weak for DX and 80 was too noisy with summer time QRN. 15m had fair stateside openings with a few BIG GUN EU stations also making the log. 10 provided a few QSO's with the best DX being one California

station.

Maybe next year I'll have more time for this one. It is one of my favorite contests because it can generate big numbers if you have the time and make the effort. It must be a real hoot with big power and antennas!

Rig: Ten Tec Omni VII, Ameritron ALS-600 400w

Antenna: 176' center fed at 60'

WHERE CAN YOU FIND PVRC MEMBERS?

(as of 8/1/2009)

The PVRC NW Region: [Bud W3LL](#)

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the City Buffet, 1306 W. Patrick Street, Frederick, MD. (301) 360-9666. It's in a small shopping center. Most arrive about 6 PM for dinner and informal discussions. The meeting begins at 7:00 PM.

>From W. Patrick Street, turn up McCain Dr. (the Mountain View Diner is on the corner), then turn right into the shopping center, then turn left and search for a parking place. The City Buffet is tucked back in the left corner of the shopping center behind the Mountain View Diner. You can't see the City Buffet from W. Patrick Street.

The Annapolis Crew : [Bob W9GE](#)

Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Broadneck Grill in Annapolis. We gather at about 5:30 PM and order dinner about 6. We break up usually before 8 PM. E-Mail [W9GE](#) to be put on the e-mail reminder list.

PVRCNC-East : [Rob, KA1ARB](#)

Meets on the first Thursday of each month. Details are always available on the web site: <http://www.pvrcnc.org>

PVRC-NC/West: [Tom N4IOZ](#)

"The Winston-Salem Courteous Operators Club" (W4WS) meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 PM in the "Pure Chrome" establishment, 505 Deacon Blvd. Winston-Salem, NC 27105. It's now a biker bar (we came with the building), so feel free to roar in on your Harley. Info at <http://www.w4ws.org>

Gaithersburg Area: [Jeff K3OQ](#)

Several of us get together, much like the downtown lunch group, about every 4 to 6 weeks and visit various restaurants in the Gaithersburg area.

Central Virginia Contest Club: [Ed NW4V](#)

(updated 5/2008)

Meets the first Tuesday of the month at St. Martins Church, 9000 St. Martin Lane, Richmond VA, (between W. Broad St. and N. Parham Road). Our meeting begins at 7PM.

Over the Hill Bunch [Bill W3AZ](#)

The group meets for lunch at noon alternately in Maryland at the College PARK Holiday Hotel Route 1 and the Beltway or in Virginia at the Parkview Marriot near route 50 and the Beltway. Meetings generally are held on the last Wednesday of the month and are subject to change. Meetings are announced by E-Mail.

All PVRC members, non-members interested in membership and guests are welcome. For information contact [Roger Stephens, K5VRX](#), 703-658-3991 for Virginia meetings; or [Bill Leavitt, W3AZ](#) for Maryland meetings.

Downtown Lunch Group

Meets on the 3rd Wednesday or Thursday of the month in the downtown area of Washington, DC. Locations occasionally change, but are always Metro accessible. Details are sent out on the PVRC reflector. Feel free to contact [Eric W3DQ](#) or [Brian WV4V](#) for details and directions.

If you have a group that meets regularly or occasionally, please send details and contact information to [W3DQ](#) for inclusion in the Newsletter!

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Information regarding the PVRC reflector can be found on the PVRC website: <http://pvrc.org/pvrcfaq.htm>

Note that this is simply the REFLECTOR FAQ pull down under the main-page
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