



THE COUNTY LINE ROADRUNNER

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Riding the County Lion

Dave, KE3VV

One really good suggestion I got during the last month for names for this column (among several good ideas) was to give the column a new name each month until one stuck or I just ran out of possibilities. Of course, life keeps presenting us with possibilities (among the joys and challenges), so that would likely outlast my tenure in this office. Most of the proposed names I did receive involved the County Lion in one way or another, so the first stab at a title is this one – Riding the County Lion. Of course, unless you are mobiling down one of those county line roads (like they have in Ohio, Florida, and other swing states), you are really just Sitting on the County pretty lame... sort of like a County Lion after you have removed a thorn



Lion, but that title seemed a from its paw.

This column is being submitted at the last (or last plus one) day because high school reunion. Oh my! I am glad that what happens in Tyson's any event, I am sure that our aging brains will forget most of it anyway. of the benefits of keeping in touch with old (no pun intended) friends and all of my classmates in the Annandale High School Class of 1962, I have made many, many good friends in ham radio – and most of them are County Hunters. Keeping in touch via the radio is one of the many benefits of county hunting, but I really enjoy the "eyeball" QSOs a lot too. Whether it is the annual MARAC convention, the MMM, the SE Mini, other Minis, or just the occasional cup of coffee in a Waffle House, these are special hours and moments that are always too brief.

I spent last weekend at my 50th Corner, Virginia, stays there. In But it did remind me once again acquaintances. In addition to

One of my county hunting friends was Rev. Art – WA4WQG – and we often met at a gas station at a crossroads in Greene County, Virginia for a quick handshake and just catching up. Art became a Silent Key this year, and I will miss those eyeballs – even though most were just a wink (and maybe a prayer).

I will be heading down to Mount Pleasant (Charleston), SC for the SE Mini at the Patriots Point Quality Inn and Suites. My favorite part of the event (other than playing music with John and Scottie or just shooting the breeze in the hospitality room) is the dinner at the Fat Hen – great food that doesn't cost an arm and a leg. Yummm! The trip will be a quick one this year

because I have to provide mechanical support for a railcar trip to New York City the following weekend. One of these days I am going to figure out how to put a working antenna on a 90 foot – 90 ton steel 1920's era restored Pullman car so I can put out counties as we travel the country behind Amtrak trains. I am also looking forward to the annual convention on July 10-13 in Deadwood and checking out the propagation from the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota.

Until next month, when I report on the mystery recipient of the Ugly Award (that I have to pass on at the SE Mini), the best of 73s from me and the County Lion. Dave - KE3VV

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Dateline CW

Ed, KN4Y.

A CW County hunter runs the last county in his car,
The shrouded day retreats.
And perceived by the stars,
Steal to their Motel Super 8.

Gator enters the shack just as I hang up the phone, “Good day Dude, with whom was you talking?” “I was talking to our buddy Spike at the weather center. We were trying to determine why tropical storm Isaac headed this way and then suddenly went west. He said the meteorological data was not conclusive and thinks some surface activity acted as a catalyst.” Gator hands me a latte, “I cannot help you, I was sun drying a new batch of possum jerky. “What are you doing.” “I am making a note to call Spike later this afternoon.”

Gator sits at the computer, “I see you logged 21 No-Star contacts and a natural bingo in the Kansas QSO party. Sure was a lot of 1X1 calls, but I see NU0Q was mobile.” “Gator, also check my Ohio QSO party.” “Not much to brag about, four No-Star and four MP Jeff, W9MSE, a few times. I see you worked Bob, N4CD. Was “No, he was just driving through Ohio and got caught up in the latte; “I also worked the Hawaii QSO party but only heard and had planned to stay up after midnight and when the QSO party Gator is giggling as he sips his latte.



contacts. I see you worked he in the QSO party?” excitement.” I sip my worked six contacts. I started I fell asleep.”

Gator is looking at my Colorado QSO party log, “You made 62 QSO’s and worked four mobiles, one of whom is Ken, W0ETT, a MARAC county hunter. You also worked 9 No-Star, a 2x2 call and a new county on 15-meters.” I wave my hand to get Gator’s attention, “Check my Tennessee QSO party log, this was a single 40-meter band party until 80-meters opened.” “Got it Dude, you made 100 QSO’s and worked six mobiles four of whom are MARAC county hunters, Julius, W2WN, Jim, N5WR, Jim, W6UB, and Jeff, NY4N, who gave you your last ‘N’ in the State.” “You did get 14 No-Star, 4 for Bingo, and 1 new county on 80-meters.” We sip our lattes and wonder how other county hunters did in the parties. .

Gator is reading the ARRL news, “I read that the current Canada Ontario section will now be four ARRL Sections. Ontario North is ONN, East is ONE, South is ONS and the greater Toronto area is GTA. Do you know the reason for the change?” I guess to be like Florida and have more than a multiplier of one in ARRL contests. This will probably be hotly discussed at the Southeast Mini.” “Really?” “No.”

Gator goes back to the computer, “I notice you worked CW in the ARRL VHF QSP party and picked up four new counties on 6-meters. What I want to see is what you did in the Arkansas QSO party where Bill and I come from. Where is the log located?” “Look in GenLog as Writelog does not have an Arkansas module.” “Here it is, get me a pastry as I massage the log.” I get a couple of fritters and hand one to Gator. “Thanks Dude. Boy you did okay on CW: 12 No-Star, 5 new counties on 15-meters and 2 on 10-meters, the last ‘K’ prefix, 2-1x2 calls and 2 1x3 calls and 4 ‘W’ prefixes and wow a Natural Bingo.” “All thanks to the great CW mobiles from Texas, W3DYA and N5NA, and the Okie from Muskogee K5CM. Will there ever be an Arkansas CW mobile?” I shake my head and sip my latte. Gator checks my

Washington QSO party log, “You got 7 No-star and two new counties on 15-meters. The only MARAC CW mobile was KC7YE, why the dismal mobile activity?” “This is called the Salmon Run and it is impossible to get a magnetic mount to stay on a salmon.” We have a good laugh. “I see you also made a few QSO’s in the South Carolina QSO party and got 4 No-Star from AD8J.” “Yes Gator, I did not hear much activity from South Carolina.” We sip our lattes.

Gators cell phone activates, “Sorry Dude got to go, the booze boys have shown up at the facility for a surprise inspection. He is gone like wet feet on a wet tile floor. The printer starts and stops. It is a printout of mobiles heard on the CW net frequencies in September. I read: AB4YZ, AF3X, AK8A, K0FG, K2HVN, K4EXT, K4YT, K5KDG, K5WAF, K7TM, K9JWV, KA4RRU, KB0BA, KB6UF, KC7YE, KG4VBK, KH8/DL3DXX, KT4CW, N0KV, N2OO, N3HOO, N4CD, N4JT, N5NA, N7IV, N9JF, N9QS, NM2L, NT2A, NT7R, VA3VOX, W0GXQ, W3DQT, W3DYA, W3ZUH, W4SIG, W5QP, W7FEN, W9MSE, WA3QNT, and WQ7A.

There are six State QSO parties in October with (403) counties up for grabs. The first is California (58) the granddaddy of QSO parties, rumored that Noah was the first /MM to work the QSO party using manure fuel cells. Next is the Arizona (15) having a centennial QSO party, followed by Pennsylvania (67), Iowa (99), New York (62) and Illinois (102). There is also the 10-10 International Net Sprint (during the Southeast Mini) and the 10-10 CW QSO party. If you need some counties on 160-meters check out the Stew Perry warm-up contest. If you have a choice, no luck or bad luck. Nap time.

New Members

MARAC Number

R4519

Callsign

KC4QWM

Name

Bill Grantham



MARAC 1st & 2nd Quarter Award Voting
April, May & June 2012
&
July, August & September 2012

Voting will be open from October 1st through October 31st for the best net control, mobile and team awards. The easiest way to place your vote is at the MARAC web site <http://marac.org/elections/>. All you will need to enter on the sign in page is your callsign and your MARAC voting key. If you have lost or do not know your voting key, enter your callsign and then click on the button below to request your key. The key will be immediately emailed to your email address on record. If you do not receive it, please go to <http://marac.org/database> to verify that your email address is correct. If you need to change/correct your email address, please contact KZ2P at K2JG@Comcast.net. You may also send me your vote via regular mail. However I must receive the ballot by the closing date of the voting window to be counted. Please include your callsign, MARAC membership and key numbers along with your choices for each class to my address listed below.

A vote for 1st choice is awarded 2 points and 2nd choice is awarded 1 point. **Please do not vote for the same call for both choices.** Of course any choices can be left blank.

1st quarter

Best Net Control SSB: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Net Control CW: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Mobile SSB: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Mobile CW: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Mobile Team: 1st Choice _____ / _____
2nd Choice _____ / _____

2nd quarter

Best Net Control SSB: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Net Control CW: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Mobile SSB: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____
Best Mobile CW: 1st Choice _____ 2nd Choice _____

Best Mobile Team: 1st Choice _____ / _____
 2nd Choice _____ / _____

Your call sign: _____ MARAC # or Election Key _____

Kent Reinke, KL1V
MARAC Election Coordinator
P.O. Box 215
Valdez, AK, 99686-0215



MARAC VOTING INFORMATION

Remember, if you are a new member or are **REJOINING** following a lapse in membership, you are **NOT** eligible to submit nominations or vote in an election until the first day of the month following receipt of initial payment of dues and valid membership application to the Secretary of MARAC.

Those individuals maintaining uninterrupted membership status are not restricted from nominating or voting in the current month.

If you are unsure of your membership status, please go to the MARAC County Hunters Database web site <http://marac.org/database> and enter your call in Call Lookup to determine your MARAC Expiration Date.

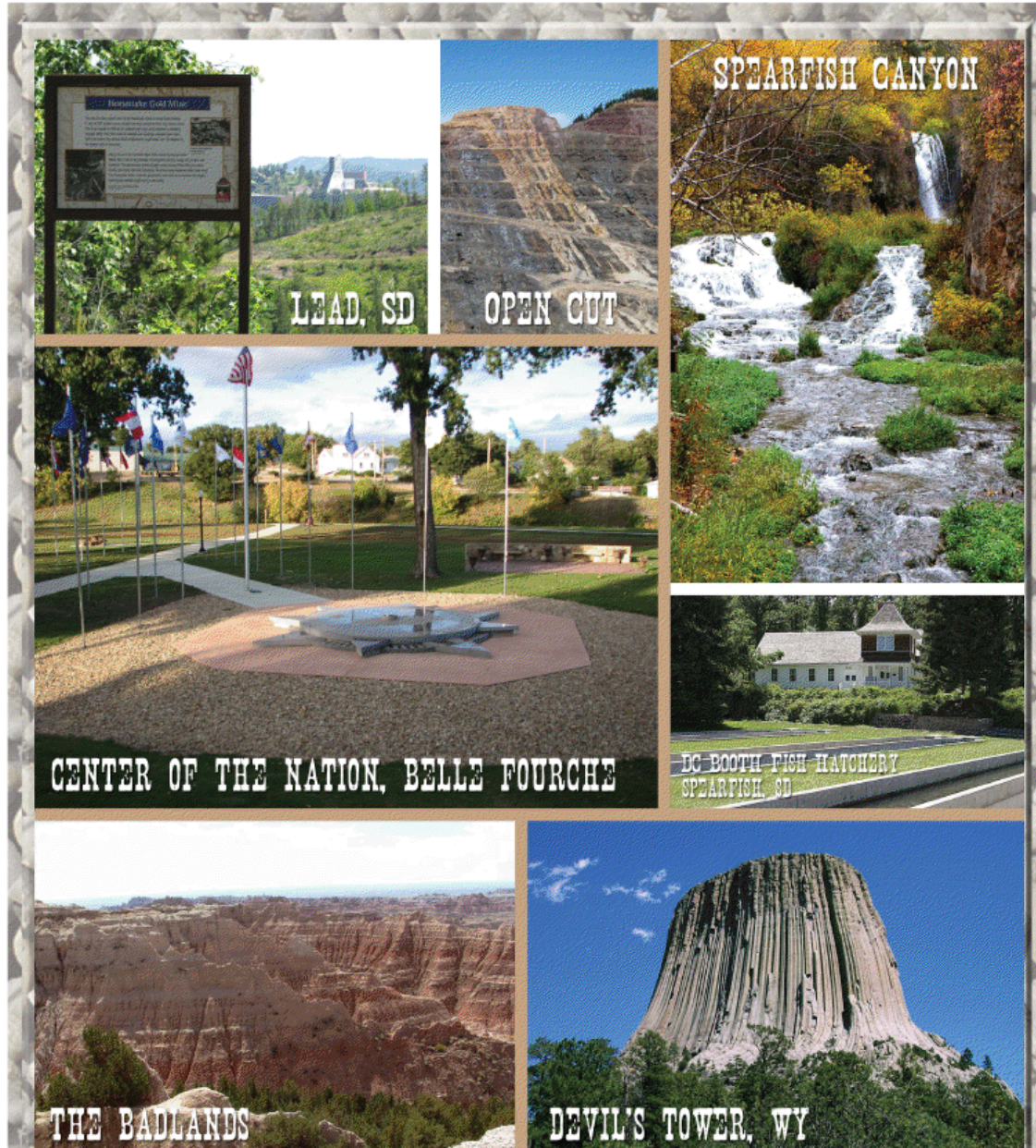
Kent Reinke
MARAC Election Coordinator

Please join us for the
2013 MARAC
National Convention



in the Beautiful **BLACK HILLS** OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Other attractions near Deadwood



SE Mini**2012 SE Mini**

- Location: Quality Inn & Suites; Mount Pleasant, SC
Dates: October 8-10, 2012
Directions: Follow I-26 East until it ends and take exit 220. Follow signs to Mt. Pleasant/Hwy 17 North. Cross Cooper River Bridge and take Coleman Blvd./Hwy 703 exit. On Coleman Blvd/Hwy 703 turn right at first traffic light. Hotel is on the right.
More details will be posted at <http://semini.superhosts.net/>
Room Rate: \$99.99 per night plus tax. Call the hotel directly for reservations and mention "amateur radio". The phone number is 800-704-4480.
The rate is valid only through September 7th - Make your reservations early!
Hotel Notes: There is a 2 night minimum stay, and a one night deposit is required. Cancellations must be done 2 weeks in advance, and all but \$25 of your deposit will be refunded. Cancellations within 2 weeks will be charged for 2 nights.
Parking: Ample FREE parking, with no overhangs to eat antennas!
Activities: A "Brews Cruise", dinner at the "Fat Hen" and walking the bridge are planned. Other area attractions include Historic Charleston tours, shopping, dining, golfing, plantations, Patriot's Point, The Hunley & Fort Sumter.
Dinner: Buffet Style Dinner- \$25/person.
Registration \$15 for first person, \$5 each additional person.
Website: More information, including online registration is available at: <http://www.semini.org>

Send registration and fees to:

John M. Hoyt – W5UGD
118 Halifax Rd
Easley, SC 29642

Email: w5ugd@homelandsecureit.com for additional information

2012 SE Mini Registration

Callsign: _____

Name (to be put on badge):

Address:

USA-CA#: _____

Additional Names/Calls/USA-CA Numbers:

Basic Registration: 15.00

Additional Registrations _____ x 5.00 _____

Banquet Tickets _____ x 25.00 _____

Total _____

DIGITAL HAPPENINGS #2

By WONAC ("Matt")

Hello again everyone. Gee, but this last month passed by in a flash! When one gets to be my age it seems like the months and years not only pass by very fast, but that the rate is accelerating! Have you ever noticed this? Well, I shouldn't complain. The Lord has taken real good care of me over the years. On with digital happenings....

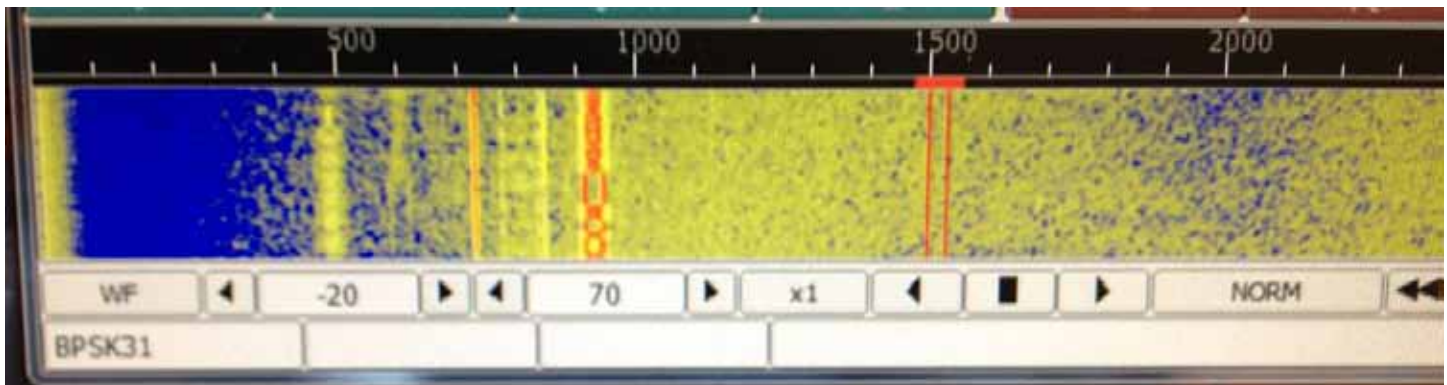
HOW TO TUNE AND DECODE DIGITAL SIGNALS

There are several things you need to know before we get into specifics. Every digital mode I have ever used (or know about) requires that your transceiver be set to Upper Side Band (USB) even on 40M and below. Yes, this goes against the standard convention, but it is the convention digital operators observe. Lower Side Band could be used equally well, but if you use it you will not copy anything, because everyone else is using USB.

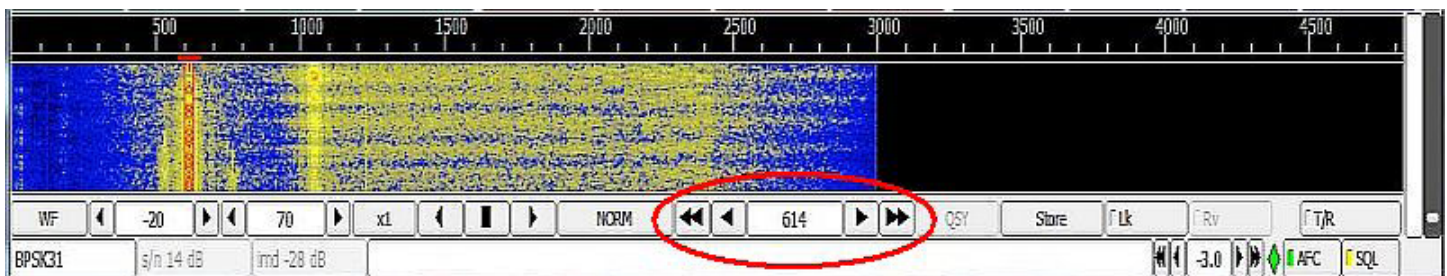
Next, you need to know how digital signals are generated. If one applies a pure 1000Hz (.001 MHz) sine wave audio tone into the mike input of a transceiver set to USB and with 14.070 MHz set on the dial, a pure CW signal will be output with a frequency of $14.070 \text{ MHz} + .001 \text{ MHz} = 14.071 \text{ MHz}$. Of course, digital signals usually use multiple tones and apply other complex modulation techniques, but the same principle applies. In fact, many manufacturers of modern transceivers use this same technique to generate their CW signals. Creators of almost all digital modes use either the sound card in your computer or a sound card in your interface box. They simply modulate the output of the sound card according to the scheme for the digital mode you are using. The modulated sound card output is then fed into the transceiver audio input. Like the CW example, the RF signal produced is offset above the transceiver dial setting in varying amounts according to the audio frequencies of the modulated audio tones. This is (I hope!) a simple explanation of what is a very complex process.

When digital signals are received, they are usually displayed on what is called a waterfall. This is a moving display that constantly scrolls downward at a slow rate. The waterfall typically has a scale of say 0 to 3500 Hz so you can see what offset the person sending is using. But remember that the output of all sound cards is typically limited to 200 Hz on the low side and maybe 2500 Hz on the high side. The output level rolls off rapidly if you try to make the sound card produce a signal outside this pass band. Below is a photo of what a waterfall display looks like on my computer using FIDigi and set for PSK-31. Please note the partial offset scale showing from 0 to ~2300 Hz+. There are several PSK signals on the waterfall, but the strongest one is at about 925 Hz on the offset scale. You can tell that this is a PSK-31 signal because of its width (~40 Hz) and that it has a warble-like sound that is unique.

All screen shots were either taken with a camera or captured direct while running FIDigi on my computer. Also, all instructions are tailored for FIDigi software. Other software may operate in a similar way, but there will be some differences. You will need to consult the manual for your particular software if it is not FIDigi.



To tune into this signal you need to move the vertical tuning band (the red band at about 1500 Hz offset) to the left until it is exactly centered over the desired signal. You do this by placing the mouse cursor anywhere in the waterfall. When you do, a yellow tuning bar appears on the waterfall and tracks your mouse pointer. Just move this yellow bar by moving the mouse left or right until it covers the signal track. Then press the left mouse button momentarily. The red tuning band then moves to match where you have placed the yellow bar. You can also move the red band left or right by placing your mouse pointer anywhere on the band itself and then push and hold the left mouse button. While holding the left mouse button down, drag the red band to where you wish it to be by moving your mouse and then release your left mouse button to leave it there. If you have done this accurately, your software will decode the text and start displaying it on your receive screen. The following shows a PSK-31 signal that has been properly tuned. Note that the small red bar just below the offset scale is centered exactly over the signal.



Some digital modes are more critical about tuning than others. MFSK-16, for example, will not print out unless it is tuned within a few Hz. If you need finer control of tuning, most software has fine and coarse tuning arrows which move the tuning band left or right in small amounts. For example, the fine tuning arrows in FIDigi moves the tuning band 1 Hz at a time in either direction. The coarse tuning arrows move it left or right by 10 Hz each time you click on them. Also, most software programs have a small box displaying the exact offset of the red tuning band (these features in FIDigi are circled in red on the screen shot). Actually, the red tuning band sets both the transmit offset and the receive offset. Both the transmit and receive offsets move together unless you lock your transmit offset. If the transmit offset is locked, you can then move your receive offset higher or lower. In the SSB mode this is more commonly called RIT or Receiver Incremental Tuning.

An excellent description of almost all the digital modes used all over the world can be found at this link maintained by G4UCJ: http://hfradio.org.uk/html/digital_modes.html. All of these modes (except ROS which is not authorized yet for American amateurs) can be used by county hunters, but to date

have only heard county hunters using PSK-31, PSK-63, MFSK-16, OLIVIA, CONTESTIA 8/500, THROB-4, JT-65, and RTTY modes. G4UCJ keeps his site very current and it contains a wealth of information. You can even listen to samples of what the various modes sound like. I highly recommend that you spend time on his site. You can learn a lot!

Now that you know how to tune a digital signal, let's go through a practical example of how you would find and tune to the signal of a mobile station running counties using digital modes. The mobile almost always needs spotting so that others can know what mode and sub mode they are using and their band and frequency. A typical spot might be as follows:

Spotter Call	FQ (KHz)	Mobile Call	Comments
WONAC	14074.3	WONAC/NOLXJ	Gilpin/Clear Creek, CO [PSK63]

The spot tells you all you need to know about finding us. First, you can see that we spotted ourselves (probably using wide area data coverage and our internet browser). Next you know that we are operating on the 20M band and that we are putting out the county line of Gilpin and Clear Creek, CO using PSK-63. (The mode has to be typed in as PSK63, not PSK-63 because the site we use translates dashes into something else).

To tune us in you would set your software to send/receive using PSK-63 Mode/Sub mode. Next, you would set your transceiver frequency to 14.0730 (most of the time you use 1 KHz increments here). Then you would set your offset to +1300 Hz. If propagation is right, you should see our trace near where you have set the offset. Move the tuning bar until our signal starts decoding, and you are ready to work us.

Another example:

Spotter Call	FQ (kHz)	Mobile Call	Comments
WONAC	7072.6	NX4W	Camden/Glynn, GA [CONTESTIA 8/500]

Here you would set your Mode/Sub mode to CONTESTIA 8/500 using the mode drop down selections. Then you would set your transceiver dial to 7062.0 and your offset to +600 Hz. All else being right, you should be able to print Lloyd on his county line in GA. Please note that this mode has a bandwidth of 500 Hz so your tuning bar will expand to 500 Hz wide also. Also note that for all modes except JT-65, the center of the tuning band is used in measuring the offset.

Next month I will go into more detail on how to adjust your transmitter so that it puts out a clean signal. If you wish to begin right away, heed the following cautions:

- 1) Your transceiver should be set to 100% power, then control the actual output by adjusting the level of the audio going into the transceiver from the sound card.
- 2) Have your transceiver set so you can see ALC action as well as power output.
- 3) Start with the audio drive set to 0
- 4) If you are using a transceiver rated at 100 Watts PEP SSB, then don't drive it higher than ~40 Watts. Remember almost all digital modes operate with a duty factor very close to 100%. In other words digital modes are like operating CW with a brick on the key!
- 5) As you gradually increase audio drive with the transmitter on (into a dummy load of course), watch for any ALC action. When it does show a bit, back off on the audio drive slightly until it just disappears.

If you observe these cautions faithfully, you are almost guaranteed to have a clean signal.

Now back to receiving. Here are some tips for better operation:

- 1) Use NO signal processing (this includes compression) on either transmit or receive. However, sometimes a little bit of noise reduction will help pull out weak signals and can be used safely in small doses for receiving. The idea here is to keep your transceiver operating as near linear as possible to reduce spurious sidebands on your signal.
- 2) The noise blanker can usually be used without any problems, but it is better left OFF if you don't need it.
- 3) If you can control your receiver pass band, you can use it to reduce overall noise. You can even use a narrow CW filter, especially when operating PSK, to reduce overall noise coming in. However, you must be operating USB. Many transceivers will not allow you to switch in the CW filter when operating SSB. If this is the case with your transceiver, there are ways to get around this, but they are beyond the scope of this article.
- 4) Find and use the fine tuning arrows. You will probably find that your mouse is harder to control when trying to move the cursor very small distances.
- 5) Adjust your waterfall so that only a little noise displays. The noise will show as granular white specks drifting down the waterfall. Having only a little noise showing is probably the most sensitive setting for decoding other signals.
- 6) Learn as much as you can about macros. You need to know how to create new ones, modify older ones, and the techniques for using them. You also need to know how you can imbed macros into your overall operation.
- 7) Study your manuals and know your equipment inside and out. Your pleasure in operating will be greatly enhanced if you do. You learn digital techniques just like you eat an elephant – one bite at a time!

DIGITAL ACTIVITIES LAST MONTH

I helped two people last month. W9SUQ (Larry) is now getting his feet wet on digital operations. We worked together to set up his TS-2000, Signalink USB interface, and his computer (using FIDigi) for software. His XYL (Rose) is pretty much housebound now. Larry is also at home almost every day since he is her primary caregiver. I hope that operating digital will help him to do something new and challenging while he is spending most of his time at home. If you are also housebound or just a little tired of the same old things, operating digital will help you break out of any rut you are in and also exercise your brain. As we get older, we not only need physical exercise, but brain exercise as well.

I also helped K4PBX (Jim) get going on JT-65 (he was already active on other modes). I then gave him his first contact using JT-65. Lots of fun for both of us! I'll be describing the JT-65 mode in a later article.

I will be happy to help anyone get started. Just email me or call me on the phone. My email is w0nac@comcast.net and my phone number is 303-799-3658. Call any time.

I have again included Table 1 which has been updated from last month as several new calls were added. If I have left anyone off the list you have my sincere apology! Just drop me a quick email and include your stats, if you know them, and I will be pleased to add you to the list. Conversely, if you are on the list and feel that you don't belong, please also drop me an email and I will remove you.

Table 1 - Active Digital County Hunters Award Status

#	CALL	NAME	STATUS* (M,F,I)	USA - DIGITAL Counties (of 3077)	(1 MODE)	(2 MODES)	FIVE MODE COUNTIES (3 MODES)	(4 MODES)	(5 MODES)
1	AA8R	Randy	F	1000+	-	-	-	-	-
2	AC0B	Cliff	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	AD1C	Jim	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	K0DEQ	Bill	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	K0PVW	Rob	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	K0WJ	Lou	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	K4PBX	Jim	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	K5GE	Gene	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	K5SF	Dick	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	K7REL	Tom	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	K8QWY	Ed	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	K8ZZ	Ed	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	KC3X	Hollis	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	KC6AWX	Bob	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	KD5YUK	Billy	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	KD7KST	Bill	M/F	1792	-	-	-	-	-
17	KG5RJ	Gregory	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	KM1C	Bill	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	N0KV	Barry	M/F	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	N0LXJ	Sharon	M/F	1298	3077	2192	1105	346	138
21	N1API	Al	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	N3HOO	Ed	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
23	N4JT	Jim	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
24	N5MLP	Ron	M/F	-	-	-	-	-	-
25	N6PDB	Dennis	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
26	N8CIJ	Dick	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
27	NA8W	Darl	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	NF0N	Mike	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
29	NN9K	Pete	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
30	NT2A	Gene	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	NU4C	Paul	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
32	NW6S	Jim	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
33	NX4W	Lloyd	M/F	-	-	-	-	-	-
34	W0NAC	Matt	M/F	1694	3077	2755	1814	809	215
35	W0QE	Larry	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
36	W4IHJ	Gary	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
37	W4YDY	Dave	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
38	W6RK	Risto	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
39	W6RLL	Joe	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
40	W7IN	Larry	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
41	W7QQ	Bill	M/F	-	-	-	-	-	-
42	W9SUQ	Larry	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
43	WA4UNS	Doug	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
44	WA7JHQ	Sterling	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
45	WB0M	Jeff	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
46	WB2ABD	Paul	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
47	WD4OIN	Jack	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
48	WQ7A	Terry	F	-	-	-	-	-	-
49	WY4D	Bennie	F	-	-	-	-	-	-

Next month I plan on discussing "How to adjust your rig for a clean signal" plus one other topic that anyone suggests. If no one has any suggestions, the second topic will be on "Other Interesting modes (JT-65)"

Future topics in the coming months include –
"How to 'put out' counties mobile using digital modes"
"How to operate as a mobile OM/YL team using digital modes"
"How to fine tune your Interface"
"How to use macros with specific examples"



So long for this time.....Please email me with your comments/suggestions at w0nac@comcast.net and please don't forget to send me your counties worked status on the USA – Digital and 5 Mode Awards so I can update the Digital County Hunter list again next month.

Thanks and 73's
Matt – WONAC

Did You Know?

South Dalota is the birthplace of Bob Barker - former host of "Price is Right"

Tom Brokaw of NBC graduated from Yankton High School and the University of South Dakota

Belle Fourche SD is the geographical center of the US, designated in 1959 and noted by an official marker and sheeherders' monument called a "Stone Johnnie"

The USS South DAKota was the most decorated battleship during WWII



**Treasurer's Report (W0NAC)
August 2012***

Beginning Account Balances Apr 16, 2012 **\$31,064.75**

Income:

Money Market Interest	\$0.54	
Awards Manager Income	\$1361.00	
Membership Income	\$684.00	
Logger distribution	\$00.00	
Total Income:		<u>\$2045.54</u>



Expenses:

Awards Manager Expenses	\$464.58	
Office Expenses	\$0.00	
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$0.00	
Total Expenses:		<u>\$464.58</u>

Net Income Less Expenses **\$1580.96**

Net Fund Transactions: **\$32,645.71**

Checking Account Balance	<u>\$6,645.04</u>	
Money Market Account Balance	<u>\$26,000.67</u>	
Total:		\$32,645.71

Note:

The following monies are not included in the above:

Awards Chairman's Funds	\$1,500.00
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* Includes August transactions recorded through 9/5/2012

Awards and Birthdays

Bob is on a well earned vacation and will catch up reports next month.

~ October 2012 ~							
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
ONLY START DATE SHOWN	1	2	3	4	5	6 PSK RUMBLE CA QP	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 AZ QP PA QP FISTS SPRINT	
14 NA RTTY	15	16	17	18	19	20 10-10 CW QP IA QP NY QP W/VE ISLANDS QP	
21 IL QP	22 RUN4BACON	23	24	25	26	27 CQ WW SSB	
28	29	30	31	Notes: CLICK ON EVENT TO GO TO WEB SITE			



Railroad Mobile

Mobile Operation on the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad

C. K. (Skip) Walter, ADØH

Boone, Iowa is known as a railroad town and as the birthplace of Mamie Eisenhower. The latter is for the old Dowd residence on Carroll St., now a small museum. The former claim to fame was as a maintenance center for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. When the CNW was bought out by the Union Pacific, many of the Boone operations were consolidated in Chicago or Omaha, leading a number of railroad employees to take early retirement. Many of them stayed in Boone, becoming volunteers on the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad, a busy tourist destination that hauls passengers 8 miles northwest of town and back again in an hour-and-a-half slow-speed trip into yesteryear.

The BSV schedules several special events during the summer visitor season, most notably Pufferbilly Days, and Day Out with Thomas the Tank Engine a few weeks later. The Boone Amateur Radio Klub (i.e., BARK) has participated the last few years by setting up a temporary station in a BSV track-side building. Starting in 2011, the group also operated “railroad mobile” from a Rock Island Lines caboose coupled to the 1:30 p.m. sightseeing train. I had operated from the fixed station last year (you may have seen our silhouette last year in the December QST, page 12) and became interested again when the invitation for operators was announced at the neighboring Story County Amateur Radio Club. A date was set (September 20) and I was scheduled to work with Steve Huffman (NØNEU), President of BARK, who had operated from the caboose last year, working 80 stations.

I arrived a bit early and checked in at the ticket office; the crew expected someone from the radio club so sent me off to explore the caboose on my own. One component I couldn't find was a source of power, and I wasn't picky whether it was 120 volts a.c. or 12 volts d.c. since I had a power supply for the former and a rig for the latter. Steve arrived, carrying a 20 meter Hamstick and two or three shoulder bags of equipment. Since his rig was a Kenwood TS-480 SAT, we used it and left my older IC-706 in my car. He asked me to climb the ladder at the front of the caboose and install the antenna, already mounted on a bracket to be C-clamped to the steel grating on the roof. Steve also passed up a beach towel, advising me to spread it over the grating so I could lean on it to reach a convenient clamping position, without the need for precariously climbing out onto the roof. I tightened the C-clamps firmly, hoping to make a solid electrical connection as well as standing up to the swaying motion of a train rolling over old track.

Steve's railroad contact soon arrived with a portable generator, which was attached by a long extension cord to his power supply and the TS 480 on the convenient built-in desk. A check of the SWR showed nearly 1:1, indicating my antenna installing had worked as planned. We had been asked to not operate while the train was in the station because the BSV communications antennas were on the water tower beside the track. Steve suggested I operate on the way out and he would operate on the way back, which sounded fair. We had sent emails to the local clubs to look for us near 14.270 khz. so I started there with “CQ from KØT railroad mobile” (you've probably figured out the T fits both Thomas and Train). But I soon found the band conditions had diminished considerably since I told the county hunters' net about the upcoming train trip when I was driving to Boone. Not only was propagation now lousy, but the “clickety-clack” of train lore sounded more like a hammer striking the steel rail (some of which could be seen through cracks in the ancient wooden floor). I worked a few stations on 14.270 but generated little interest, so I suggested to Steve that we move up to the 14.336 net since they would be looking for us. I had a short run on the net (but not as many as I would in a good mobile run) and then moved back to 14.270, after asking someone to post that information on the internet.

That seemed to improve my QSO rate but not to contest speed. Some were short, signal report only exchanges and others were actual conversation, often with question such as, “Are you really railroad mobile,” or “are you moving right now?” I answered yes to both, although at the end of the outbound line, the train does stop for several minutes while I kept operating. The route passes through acres of cornfields but also through cuts in some hills, signal killers while down in these artificial valleys. It also passes over a 156 feet high trestle over Bass Point Creek, which takes on a new perspective when viewed out the end of a caboose instead of sideways from a passenger car. If the train would stop on the bridge, which has no sides to shield any signals, that might be a great operating position; but I had to settle for about 30 seconds each way.

When it was time for the return trip, for which the train is simply backed all the way to Boone, I offered the mic to Steve and he said to keep on going. I took a drink of water and dove in again. By this time, enough hams had seen KØT posted so there were more calls, but they came in bunches, with several stronger signals making the band sound a bit more normal through the noise. One of the better signals was from EA3BY in Spain, our only DX contact, although North American contacts were from coast to coast and included many Canadian provinces. A new source of noise on the backing train was the train horn, which was mounted at the end of the caboose just a few feet from the radio; a train crew member on the back running board sounded the horn as the caboose passed each “W” (for “whistle” from the old days) sign. The horn must have been audible on some of my transmissions; even with earphones, it blanked out the radio signals at each crossing.

I kept making contacts and Steve kept logging until the train came to a complete stop at the station. I hope I worked most of the people who called but I know there were some who heard KØT much more clearly than I heard them. Steve announced we had logged 86 QSOs, under the noisiest conditions I could recall. I climbed the ladder to the roof one more time and un-clamped the antenna while Steve packed up the rig and power supply. A big thank you to Steve for his first-class equipment (as well as his previous experience, which led him to include wipes, knowing my hands would be covered with dirt when I returned from the roof). Special thanks to the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad people, for providing their rolling QTH and generator and for cheerfully cooperating with the local radio club. Finally, thanks to the hams who patiently complied with my requests of “please repeat your call,” which I asked until I was certain about its accuracy. If you want a colorful QSL (from either the September 20 on-board operation or the weekend fixed station), just follow the instructions in the KØT website. Boone County may not be a rare county but how many hams can confirm a contact with a station signing “railroad mobile.”



Skip Walter (ADØH) and Steve Huffman (NØNEU) at the caboose operating desk



Hamstick antenna on the Rock Island caboose

My sincere apologies to Gary, K4EXT, for omitting this article from the original mailing - even after acknowledging that I got it. Beats me where it disappeared to. Dave KU4YM

History Happens

Gary, K4EXT

Over four decades ago, at the December 15, 1970 Board of Directors meeting, it was decided to obtain a club license for MARAC. Bob, K0AYL was assigned the task and subsequently became custodian of the club's first call sign ... WB0DPD.

A set of operating guidelines for the new club call were approved in February 1971. Initially, only club officers were permitted to use the club call sign for either portable or mobile operation. It was further decided that WB0DPD would only count counties from mobile stations (except for Alaska and Hawaii) in its goal of obtaining USA-CA and other MARAC awards.

As shown in the picture below, the MARAC club station received USA-CA Worked-All-Counties award #584 on September 9, 1988. Club station WB0DPD also received Worked-All-Counties 2nd time in June 2000.

The MARAC BOD unanimously approved a club call sign change from WB0DPD to K9DCJ at their September 8, 2004 meeting. Arnie Bachman, a long-time and well-respected county hunter, had become a silent key in April of the previous year. Joyce, WB9NUL worked with Arnie's XYL Lorraine in letting Arnie's call sign become a permanent part of MARAC. The old call sign was officially cancelled by the FCC in September 2004 and the club call sign became K9DCJ, with WB9NUL as its custodian.

Additional awards for WB0DPD/K9DCJ include Worked-All-Counties 3rd time and USA-CW, both dated September 27, 2005.



The County Line Roadrunner
MARAC Secretary
2690 Bohicket Rd
Johns Island, SC 29455

“A Road Runner Is A Very Fast Bird”

Monthly Deadline for Articles is the 25th!

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