

CHEESE BITS



W3CCX

CLUB MEMORIAL CALL



ARRL
Affiliated
Club

SCANNED TO PDF BY BERT, K3TJV, 2013

VOLUME XLI

May 1999

Number 5

The PREZ SEZ

Guess what!? It's June Contest time again! Al, N3ITT, has once again taken on the task as chief chairman in charge. The club has enjoyed excellent participation by members for this event over the past several years. That fact alone has made the job much easier on the chairman's nerves and also produced creditable results in the scoring column. Remember that we do this the old fashion way with lots of hard work and long hours at the operating position. Therefore, we need lots of people to help spread the load. There are lots of jobs that don't even involve radio if you are so inclined. I am sure the food preparation crew would not turn down an extra hand or two. There is a local telephone system that needs setting up and electrical cable to be strung. We also could use dedicated noisemakers to keep the bears away at night. There are lots of ways you could help out if you want to participate. If all else fails, be sure to work W3CCX on every band you have available. There will be a June contest organizational and equipment inspection meeting at W3GXB's (A Map to his QTH is on the Web page) on Saturday May 22, 1999 at 1000. The more preparation we do at home, the better things will go up on the mountain. Why don't you give Al, N3ITT a call and help him have a good nights sleep.

Next month is the annual election of officers. It is probably the most important meeting of the year for the future of the organization. Everybody likes to be a member of a really fine organization such as the Pack Rats, but few are willing to step forward and help make those really great things that you enjoy doing become reality. Finding good officers is not something unique to ham radio clubs, but is a problem that every organization (countries too) faces on a regular basis. I know there are many hidden leaders out there that, for reasons known only to themselves, seem unwilling to step forward and assume a leadership position. The problem is that we, as officers of the club, have no way of knowing who you are so we can maybe twist your arm a little. The Board of Directors forms a nominating committee to try and identify those that they think could do a good job for the club. Sometimes they overlook somebody. Did they overlook you? Don't be offended. Some of you are

(Continued on page 3)

MEETINGS

Third Thursday each month at 8:00 PM
Southampton Free Library
947 E. Street Road
Southampton, PA 18966

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PACKRAT 222 MHz REPEATER - W3CCX/R

222.98/224.58 MHz, Churchville, PA FN20LE

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	AA3GN	(1 Yr) Joe Landis, landisj@nud.com
	W2SJ	(1 Yr) Bob Fischer, bsf57a@prodigy.com

PACK RAT BEACONS - W3CCX/B

FM29JW Philadelphia, PA
50.080 144.284 222.065 432.295 903.072 MHz
1296.251 2304.037 3456.220 5760.190 10,368.177 MHz

MONDAY NIGHT NETS

<u>TIME</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NET CONTROL</u>
7:30 PM	50.150 Mhz	WA3EHD
8:00 PM	144.150 MHz	N3ITT
8:30 PM	222.125 MHz	W2SJ
8:30 PM	224.58R MHz	W3GXB
9:00 PM	432.110 MHz	W3RJW/WA3DRC
9:30 PM	1296.100 MHz	WA3NUF/AA2UK
10:00 PM	903.100 MHz	N3AOG

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

LADIES' NIGHT:	N3AOG	215-443-9965
JUNE CONTEST:	N3ITT	610-847-5490
HAMARAMA:	NK8Q	610-847-2285
VHF CONFERENCE:	KB3XG	610-584-2489



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(Prez Sez. continued from page 1)

well camouflaged. If you are one of those people, let Joe, AA3GN know that you are interested in becoming an officer of the club. Remember we all can't be just "members" and still have a world class radio club.

Thanks to Dan Henderson, N1ND, for coming down from the league and making a fine presentation at the April club meeting. Dan is the new head of the ARRL contest branch and as such is responsible for all aspects of the ARRL contest programs. It is no small task and we wish him well at his new position. Thanks also to Kay Craigie, WT3P, for bringing us up to date on happenings in the Atlantic division.

The 1999 Hamarama will be held this year at the Middletown Grange Fair Grounds in Wrightstown, PA (Same as the WARC Hamfest location). The VHF Conference will be at the same location as last year, the Hampton Inn in Willow Grove, PA. Details are available on the Pack Rat web page (www.ij.net/packrats). As more information becomes available it will be posted on the web page.

73, Ron, W3RJW

JUNE CONTEST FINAL PREP!

de AI, N3ITT

Almost that time again!!! The June VHF QSO Party is barely a month away, and the Packrats are again preparing for the annual trek to Camelback Mtn. to do battle with the other mountain-multis!! What are YOU doing to help YOUR club move up in the standings this year? Hopefully if you are physically able to make the trip you're planning to make it up to the mountain at least part of the time to help out in the effort. It really takes all able bodied Pack Rat to pull this off. If you really can't make it up please make an effort to work the club station. If you only have limited time to get on the air during the contest let me know and we can set a sked. If you are can go out as a rover, do it, let me know, maybe we can arrange for you to get other bands.

At this time things look good, with all the key positions filled, I would like to get some volunteers signed on as back ups.

Well not much more to say that I haven't said before, The June Contest prep meeting will be at the QTH of Bob Fox W3GXB on May 22 at 10 AM. all planning to go to the mountain are urged to attend.

A June Contest Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 22. Let's meet at 10 AM at Bob's (W3GXB's) I urge all who are planning to come up to the mtn. to attend, not just Band Captains and others with "official" jobs. If U are a band captain and cannot attend try to find a co-captain. **OK PACKRATS.....GO GET EM !!!!!!!!!!!**, 73 AI N3ITT

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS - MAY 1999

- 2 **Warminster Amateur Radio Association Hamfest** at the Middletown Grange Fairgrounds in Wrightstown, Pa. Talk-in on 146.69/09 and 146.52. VE Testing.
- 8 **Packrat Ladies Night** will be held at the Mill Race Inn, Holland in Warrington, Pa. starting at 6:30 PM.
- 8 **ARRL 902, 1296, and 2304 MHz Spring Sprint**, 6 PM to 11 PM. These sprints will be held simultaneously. See March 1999 Cheesebits for rules.
- 9 **Mothers Day**.
- 13 **Packrat Board of Directors** meeting at the QTH of Jim, WA3EID at 8:00 PM. All interested Parties invited. Call 215-659-4359 for directions.
- 14-16 **Dayton Hamvention**. If you've never been there you've never seen anything like it. If you're looking to buy it or sell or see it. The VHF/UHF Forum will include talks on both Saturday and Sunday. There will be a preamp gain/noise figure contest on Sunday morning.
- 14 **Dayton Weak Signal Banquet** at the Holiday Inn North, Wagner Road, Dayton, Ohio.
- 16 **Armed Forces Day**
- 16-17 **ARRL 50 MHz Spring Sprint** 2300Z May 16 (Saturday Evening) until 0300Z. See March 1999 Cheesebits for rules.
- 20 **Packrat general membership** meeting at the Southampton Free Library on Street Road in Southampton, Pa. at 8:00 PM. All club members and VHFers invited. Nominations for the election of officers in June will be accepted. Ed Finn, WA3DRC, will give a presentation on the design and manufacture of large scale integrated circuit computer chips.
- 27 **LEAP INTO THE MICROWAVES** with the Packrats! 903 and above. Every 4th Thursday of the month operate from 8 to 10 PM local time on any band 903 MHz and above. For coordination on those difficult long haul contacts 144.260 MHz is the suggested liaison frequency. So here's your chance to fix what broke in the contest and work all those stations you missed.

SWAP SHOP:

(send all ads to the editor)

FOR SALE: CALLSIGN HISTORY. Name and address of each holder since 1912. Cost \$15 plus SASE for printed CERTIFICATE. Wanted CallBooks before 1970 and QST's before 1940 will buy or trade. Also looking for 1x2 Ham Radio License Plates for my collection. Ron Allen W3OR, PO Box 73, Bethel, De. 19931-0073 or call 302-875-1100.

FOR SALE: 2 element 40 meter Mosley beam, \$250.00, 4 ea. 2304 MHz Loopers, mounted ready for your hardline, \$200.00, 4 ea. 3456 MHz. Loopers with power divider, \$200.00. Contact Herb, K2LNS, 570-472-2230.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

N3XEM Update: I'm Back It's Great To be Home!!!! 10:30 am Sunday May 2. I'll be in touch Beautiful Day to get home Bob XEM.

TID BITS

Check the latest happenings of the Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club by checking our web page at <http://www.ij.net/packrats/>.

VUCC Award Checking: If you want QSL cards checked for your initial VUCC Award or an update, contact Harry, W3HT at hbrown@voicenet.com or 610-584-4846. I'll do updates (up to 25 additions) at regular club meetings.

Editor/Printer Errors. The editor, in error, gave credit to the first home brew night entry to John, N2RTX for a 2 Meter Transverter. Would the real constructor of this project identify himself? Also, the printer made an error (honest. I checked my input to him) in the placement of photos for homebrew night. The MFJ photo really did not contain the Bill/Mark W2UR/AAUK tower mounted 10 GHz Transverter/25 watt amplifier and Paul, W2PED did not need that large outdoor case for his small voice keyer.

May/June QEX items of VHF interest: A 300 Watt MOSFET Linear Amplifier for 50 MHz by Richard Frey, K4XU. Zack, W1VT's RF column discusses transmission line models for the ARRL Radio Designer program.

New Beacons, NorCal 10 and 24 GHz Sender: owner-vhf@w6yx.stanford.edu KF6KVG has placed two new beacons in operation on 10 and 24 GHz in Northern California. Both are low power, continuous carrier with FM voice ID at 1 minute intervals. Location: Mt Umuhnum, CM97AE, 3400 Ft ASL Frequency: 10367.990 MHz . 24191.977 MHz. The 10 GHz beacon has been heard at S9 in CM88SI using an 18 inch offset feed dish. Send reception reports via snail mail to Bob Johnson, KF6KVG. Other Northern California beacons are: Mt VACA on 10368.325 Mt St. Helena on 10368.018, 73. Steve K2IYQ

Microwave Beacons. All the Pack Rat microwave beacons are back on the air. The 10 GHz beacon frequency has been changed to 10368.170. The six meter beacon is still off, but should be back in a week or so. dc W3RJW.

The **May 99 issue of QST** shows Packrats Rick, WC2K sharing the North American 222 MHz Aurora record with WB5LUA at 2088 Km. Packrat Harry, K3HZO shares the North American 903 MHz Aura Record with WA3NZL at 87 Km. The results for the 1998 ARRL International EME Competition shows W3SZ operating on 144 MHz and K3HZO on 1296 MHz.

Old TX Tube INFO. I was looking for details of an old transmitting tube that I couldn't even find in old ARRL Handbooks. Found an archive site that has over 2000 specs for tubes. Raytheon and Amperex especially. This may be helpful for some of you, it was for me. <http://wps.com/archives/tube-datasheets/index.html>. 73, Ron, K5LLL, EL29fq

BoatAnchor Manual Archive - <http://bama.sbc.edu>.

NEW ATLANTIC DIVISION CAC REPRESENTATIVE

Kay Craigie, Atlantic Division Director announced a new Atlantic Division CAC Representative, Russ Healy, K2UA.

Per the QRZ web page, Here's Russ's brief ham resume: K2UA, formerly NJ2L, is "Rus" Healy. My station is at my home, about 30 miles south of Rochester, NY, in Ontario County (not Livingston, which is where the local post office is located). I live on a ridge between the two smallest Finger Lakes (Honoye and Canadice). The Finger Lakes region is a sparsely populated, beautiful area with exceptional fishing and scenery, and produces more wine than any other region in the US, except for California's Napa Valley.

My station, which includes two 32-meter towers and various monoband beam and wire antennas, is QRV on all bands from 1.8 MHz through 10.4 GHz, CW and SSB. (Although I have antennas for the WARC-79 bands, I very rarely operate those bands. But I'm glad to get on to give out Ontario County for the county hunters, or for any other award.)

I'm active in many contests, primarily CW on HF, and primarily the ARRL VHF contests above HF. Most of my equipment for VHF/UHF/SHF is home-brew. The computer-controlled station-control electronics for HF contesting is also home-brew, as are two of my HF amplifiers. I *do* QSL, if sometimes a bit slowly. An SASE speeds things up. Please be patient!

See you in the next contest!—73, Rus, K2UA. Email: k2ua@microwavedata.com.

SPRING 1999 TWO METER SPRINTS

Place	Call	Points	Grids	Score
1	K3MM	226	48	10848
2	K1UHF	171	32	5472
3	K2TXB	149	34	5066
4	W2KV	124	27	3348
5	KA2RDO	88	33	2904
6	K5MA	111	24	2664
7	W1QK	120	21	2520
8	K8EB	73	29	2117
9	AA8Q	73	28	2044
10	K8MD	64	27	1728

Place	Call	Points	Grids	Score
11	WA2BPE	63	27	1701
12	K1DS	81	21	1701
13	WZ1V	86	19	1634
14	W3EKT	68	22	1496
15	WA3DRC	78	18	1404
16	K9YR	61	22	1342
17	W3SE	89	15	1335
18	W2PED	72	18	1296
19	NK8Q/3	67	19	1273
20	K3KEL	52	23	1196

Place	Call	Points	Grids	Score
21	AF1T	63	18	1134
22	K1ZF	75	15	1125
23	W1AIM	57	19	1083
24	K8BKM	47	23	1081
25	K6TSK	78	13	1014
55	N3NGE	42	13	546
110	N3XEM	33	6	198
153	NE31/M	19	3	57
--	W2UR	158	21	5214

144 MHZ SPRINT COMMENTS

K1DS, Rick. Operated atop Potshop Road hill in the station wagon, with 160 watts to 10 elements and a rotator for the beam. Was visited briefly by NE31. Lot of nice Packrat activity. QSOs: 81 X Grids: 21 Score = 1701. C U on 222 next week. Great to see everybody's results. It sure was a lot easier operating one band from the car for almost 4 hrs. rather than 8 bands and being on the move for 24+ hrs! The use of the rotator (U-100 plugged into an inverter) and a better QTH made operating this event a pleasure. I know we hear this every VHF contest/event: SPREAD OUT! The activity centered between 175-225 made it easy to find the action, but tough to compete with the QRM!

W2UR, Bill. AA2UK Operating. 158 Qso's and 33 grids. 73 Bill

AA3GN, Joe Landis. Nice score guys, but a real exercise in frustration for me. I had a bad rotor loop connector and needed to keep turning till the band noise came up, indicating some continuity. Then I kept running QRP until it opened again and VSWR went up. I tried climbing the tower to fix it, but it was just too windy and my wind load is too high :) . Activity seemed good. It was very frustrating to hear all of the Ohio guys and VE's, but unable to work them. Every time I tried my backup brick amp, the loop would just open again. Forget about the tube amp. I ended up with 7 grids and about 30 Q's, before pulling the plug at about 9:30. I did somehow manage to work K4QI, FM06 and K2SPO in FN13. Horrible conditions for me but weather permitting I will fix this all this weekend. I will certainly check the other bands when the tower is down. I'm glad all of this stuff is breaking after the Jan contest.

NE31, Griff. Was rover with 2 watts and a squalo loop on the car. Met with Rich, K1DS at the old Nike site. Found some other good spots and spots that were surprisingly not so good. Only worked 19 Qs but several grids including K3MM in Gettysburg. I enjoyed working all the Packrats. I hope that I can get out for the 432 Sprint. 73

W2PED, Paul Drexler. Missed the first hour and 15 minutes of the contest due to family constraints. Worked 72 Q's and 18 grids... best "DX" FM06. Never heard a single a single VE3. Would've been better off going QRP portable like K1DS. Hi :) CU in the 222 sprint. W2PED. 72 Q's. 18 grids.

K2TXB, Russ Pillsbury. Hi all. I had a lot of fun working the 2 meter sprint last night, but it was very trying due to a lot of line noise in all directions. Still, I managed to work 154 Q's and 35 grids. My apologies to all the stations who were calling but I couldn't hear due to the noise. The noise was never less than S3 in any direction! Conditions seemed mostly poor although a little better to the south. Worked a bunch of stations in FM17, FM06, FM07, EM97, and even worked W4DEX in EM95. W8PAT in EN81 was furthest west, also EN91, 92, 93, FN00, 02, 03, but no EN90, FN01 or FN04 this time. Furthest north was FN35, VE2PSU. 73, Russ K2TXB

K3GNC, Jerome. Everything working fine. Worked 91 QSO's and 20 grids. I could have worked more grids but I never looked west or south for more than 15 minutes out of the four hours. I wanted to see what my NE, N, and NW potential was from my new location. I was impressed enough that I have decided to put up a small 4 bay array by the June contest.

N3XEM, Bob. Nice to work Gentleman it was great to see activity on the bands. In the interim of checking into nets and making and taking my own health and welfare calls I had a good time. 33 Qs and 6 grids. The date for my Heart Surgery has been set for those who are unaware April, 23-99 Some one will keep the "RATS" apprised and I'll be glad when this is behind me, and hoping for a quick recovery! Looking forward to June contest !!!Oh and "bye the bye" NO "Ron" not as weekend at BerniesHi....73 Bob xem

NK8Q, Mark. I'm glad I wasn't the only one with lots of line noise. I spent as much time troubleshooting why I had all that noise (after just changing the station around to include some new equipment moments before the contest). I actually didn't do as well as Rick from his portable location. It was mostly fun anyway, and nice to see some springtime propagation and of course the activity is always welcome. Covered most of a 300 mile radius. Finished with 67 QSOs and 19 Grids. See you on 222 MHz!

The North East Weak Signal Group's

222 MHz Sprint Report Totals

Call	Grid	QSOs	Grids	Total
AA3GN	FN20	20	4	80
K1DS	FN20	40	18	720
K0GU	DN70	9	5	45
K1TEO	FN31	62	22	1364
K1TR	FN42	27	13	351
K1UHF	FN31	54	20	1080
K3GNC	FN20	20	8	160
K7XW	CN96	9	5	45
K8GP	FM18	52	13	676
KA2RDO	FN12	37	21	777
KB0NES	EN34	21	8	168
KB0VUK	EN34	29	12	348
KD4K	EM74	6	5	30
N2CEI	FN20	70	23	1610
N2MH	FN20	4	3	12
NK8Q	FN20	16	4	64
N7AU	DN07	9	3	27
NY1E	FN43	24	10	240
VE2PJ	FN35	2	1	2
VE3AX	FN02	58	31	1798
W1COT	FN31	18	8	144
W1PM	FN41	27	10	270
W3EKT	FM19	27	12	324
W3SE	DM04	23	8	184
W4YHO	FN42	27	9	243
W4EUH	FM18	19	8	152
WA2BPE	FN12	33	19	627
WA2ZFH	FN30	27	9	243
WD0BQM	DN81	4	3	12
WZ1V	FN31	36	17	612

The North East Weak Signal Group's

432 MHz Sprint Report Totals

Call	Grid	QSOs	Grids	Total
AA3GN	FN20	52	16	832
K1DS	FN20	50	21	1050
K1TEO	FN31	104	26	2704
K1TR	FN42	42	13	546
K2YAZ	EN74	19	17	323
K3GNC	FN20	44	13	572
K3IXD	FM19	5	2	10
K7XW	CN96	14	6	84
K8BKM	EN82	27	18	486
K9RQ	EN61	8	8	64
K9YR	EN52	4	4	16
KB0NES	EN34	23	6	138
KB1VC	FN42	12	5	60
KF6MXK	CM87	6	2	12
NOKE	DM69	8	5	40
N1RWY	FN54	8	5	40
N2MH	FN20	35	6	210
N3XJX	FN10	11	7	77
N6DN	DM14	21	4	84
N8VEA	EN91	8	3	24
NE3I	FN20	18	6	108
N9TZL	EN52	7	5	35
W0RSJ	FN20	62	21	1302
WIATT	FN31	21	5	105
W1COT	FN31	44	11	484
W1PM	FN41	21	8	168
W3EKT	FM19	40	17	680
WA2ZFH	FN30	24	8	192
WA3DRC	FN20	45	17	765
WZ1V	FN31	63	16	1008

222 MHz SPRINT COMMENTS

K3GNC, Jerome. 222 Sprint. 20 QSOs, 8 Grids. I only put in approx. 1 1/2 hours in most of that time I was having trouble with the match on my temporary piece - of - junk 10 ft. CC. Even with the 222 FM antenna, I heard very well. I gave out a lot of QRZ, because the antenna had "no directivity" so I got clobbered by the stations.

NK8Q, Mark. Well, as previously written, I did end up having problems, poor Rx, so here is the wrap up (very disappointing): 4 grids, 16 QSOs, 128 points. Did better on 1296 this past January! At least I had some time to work on my Final Exam during the contest. 73s.

K1DS, Rick. Same setup as last time in the rover station wagon, with the addition of a memory keyer--that seemed to have only half a brain left--the CQ message! 120 Watts to an 11 element yagi, in FN20hc. Propagation to Canada seemed fine, as worked several stations there...FN02, O4 and 14. Dry to the south. Managed to get FN43, and the usual NE grids. Tnx to Packrats for letting me tail-end you to pick up a few grids. 40 QSOs 18 grids. CU next Weds for 432...73, Rick.

222 MHZ SPRINT COMMENTS Continued

W1YHO, Gary Dallas, Was on for the 222 Sprint for a while last night. 27 Q's and 9 grids, almost all to the southwest. Was nice to hear the activity on the band. Worked a number of 'Rats. Hope to work everyone next week on 432. regards, Gary, W1YHO

432 SPRINT COMMENTS

NK8Q, Mark. Studying, final exam, due next Friday. didn't even crank up the tower or hook up the preamp, but did play a bit with only about 10 Watts or so, with the tower cranked down, my best QSO was with FM16, KN4SM, on CW. he gave me a 579!! finished with 14 QSOs, 5 grids, 70 points, and one more exam problem almost done! 73s, Mark J. Schreiner

AA3GN, Joe Landis. It was nice to work a sprint where everything stayed running well, start to finish. Since the antenna and feedline upgrade, I certainly can hear much better. I thought activity and conditions were good, but that could be the station improvements too :) Lots of slow QSB. W1YHO was just above the noise at times, and then would rise to about S5.

I worked 50 some stations in 16 grid squares, including FM06, FM16. Best DX was WA8WZG, EN81. Tom was about 5 and 5. He was quite an easy contact on SSB, and a new one for me on 432. I did not hear KE8FD on at all. Gary is usually on from EM89, and we have worked thru 903. A few other 8's heard but not able to pull them out.

I had other things going on, and couldn't operate more than about half the contest, on and off. Equipment: FT990, DEMI transverter, K2RIW PA, GaAsFET preamp in shack, FO-25. Was not driving the amp hard at all - only about 450W key down CW. Signal reports were very good. Now I have some work to do before the microwave sprint. 903 Rx is way down and I still have some switching problems there and on 1296. Thanks, everyone for showing up. 73, Joe - AA3GN, FN20jg

K1DS, Rick. Appears that the little hill near me is better than the quarry location on 309. Third time I've been up there, and got lots of radio action from the car--100 watts and a single 14 el yagi, worked 50 stations in 21 grids, including EN93, FN02 and 03, FM06 among others. NE3I was hot with his 2 watts and homebrew 4 el loop, visiting to say hi. Brought just enuf spare parts, as the coax N connector to preamp was faulty--had a spare jumper that did the trick. Operation is far better "oiled" since this is my 5th time out with this set-up. Watching the sunset while operating in a nice quiet spot is a pleasure. Glad to work as many Packrats as possible, but many of the regulars missed this one! I do plan to operate with similar setup for 6 meters, and then again for 902-1296-2304 sprints. CUL. 73, Rick, K1DS

NE3I, Griff. Thought I would be out of town on business so I had to HB an antenna for the rover when the case settled at the last minute. Put together a 4 element quad...loop yagi, sorry, out of a 1X2 piece of wood, some plastic, wire and 20 feet of RG 58 coax. Checked continuity between center and outside of connector and it was a dead short, ohhh no, duh, it's a loop, so I realized that was probably ok. (This was my first HB 432 antenna.) Then listened for the beacon in the shack in my basement but could hear no signal. Duh, you're below ground. Signal was S9 from the second floor which is better than the S8 I get from the yagi in the attic. Gee this thing may work. Beacon was S9 +5 at the site where I hooked up with Rick K1DS. Good front to back gain and got a call immediately from Joe AA3GN while using only 250 mw testing with Rick. Wow, another QRP pile up. Worked 18 stations with 2 watts or less in 6 grids, including FN10, FN11 (Williamsport), FN21, all new for me on 432 and FN31. Thanks guys, it was fun.

DISTANCE SCORING FOR A VHF CONTEST

dc, Ed, K2DNE

In the March issue of CQ Contest that I received several weeks ago, Gene W3ZZ, wrote in his VHF Contest Forum column an article: "Distance Scoring: Time to Change the Rules?". Since I haven't seen any posts on this reflector about the article I thought I'd open the can of worms... (to get the full impact of the article I encourage those interested to get a copy of the journal and read the full article). Gene opens his column discussing that there is a sense of a certain stagnation in the activity in vhf contests even with the sale of the new IIF rigs that have added capabilities on 6 and 2 meters and even 432 MHz. Not so on HF where activity and scores are increasing (not just due to the improved condx). The article continues with a discussion about rules, some historical perspectives and what Gene describes as the overemphasis on microwave scoring and the increasing emphasis on FM in densely populated areas. To help level the playing field (especially for stations not close to a major metropolitan area) he suggests the use of distance scoring. Distance scoring is based upon the RSGB sponsored VHF contests in England (which uses 6 digit grid squares as exchanges and distances are calc'd with software) and the Stew Perry Challenge on 160 meters (which uses a variant of the European system). What W3ZZ proposes in his article is the use of distance scoring for one of the ARRL vhf contests (namely the June VHF QSO Party due to the higher likelihood of sporadic E openings) - the scoring scheme is based on a set of concentric rings of grid squares and to use a fixed point value for each of the rings. For example; regardless of band, contacts with any grid that touches your own grid (and I assume your own grid, even though not defined in the article) would count as one point. Contacts with the next ring of grids count for two points and contacts with the next ring of grids and any grids farther away than those count for three points.

(Continued on page 8)

The article concludes with a comparison of the top five multi-multi stations in the June 1998 VHF QSO Party. The order of finish with the present set of rules was W2SZ, AA9D, K3MQH, W3CCX, K8GP - using concentric circle distance scoring the order of finish would have been AA9D, K3MQH, K8GP W3CCX, W2SZ (Gene admits the scores he calculated are not necessarily exactly accurate because he only had access to the K8GP log which was used to make the estimates for the other logs as well as the published results in QST and the preliminary scores published by WZ1V on the internet). The stated "bottom line is that the distance scoring metric does even out the differences between living in a populous area vs living in an area with a low density of contesters". I think W3ZZ's proposal has significant merit. Personally, I have been discouraged to see the huge scores some multi-ops run up by using "captive rovers" (a subject well discussed in the past on this reflector) and the use of FM in densely populated areas to pad scores. I like the concept of vhf DXing in contests and the associated reward for working a station 500 miles away on 2m vs one 10 miles away. The ARRL has even admitted in the write-up for the September 1998 VHF QSO Party in March QST the noted decline in entrants and activity. I know I've become somewhat bored with vhf contesting (working the same stations, in the same grids, on the same 6 bands, with the same scoring and exchange three times a year, year after year has become just a little dull) which is why I've explored the QRP portable category and an occasional stint at a multi-op. Rovers and club competition has added some excitement - would a change in scoring, even if only for one of the three major contests add some needed fuel? Before posting this I checked with the author of my contest logging software (VHFTBST) to see if writing new software based on the concentric grid distance scoring concept would be difficult. The response I got back was that it would not be difficult - I assume the same would probably be true for most of the other popular contest logging software.

The can of worms has been opened... what does the vhf+ contesting community think?

Please be gentle with the flames that will be aimed back at me - the intent of the post is to generate rational discussion on the internet about a mutually interesting subject associated with our hobby at a time when activity and conditions on vhf are in a lull.
73, Ed K3DNE

PLEASE PASS THE CRYING TOWEL

Submitted by Rick, K1DS

This was the first year that I participated in "The Crying Towel" and recognized the tremendous power that this contest post-mortem has for future improvements. The collective sharing of what went right and what went wrong; directing thoughts and hopefully actions to a better activity next time around. As a consultant in quality management, my role is often to facilitate these activities, collate the common themes, and gain some action on them. Not unexpectedly, the themes, almost predictably, were advanced planning and preparation, back-up systems, and knowledge of the game.

Recognizing those who started a year ago, after the '98 VHF SS to plan for their assault on '99 with addition of a more ergonomic station, more antenna, better feedlines, adding a band, another amp or pre-amp, the reports were very favorable. Packrats who gathered gear, built and tested their setups, reaped the rewards. Those who procrastinated got their due. It is just human nature to wait until the deadline to swing into action, and there were commonalities among those who were still up on their roofs or towers when the contest started. Judging from the traffic jams at the postal offices around midnight on April 15th, most of us are guilty of the same when it comes to making out our 1040's and paying taxes.

For some, the preparation for "The Crying Towel" on the other hand, seems to be better than actual preparation for the contest. To that end, I would like to make a recommendation that we institute a special pre-contest activity, called "The Sweatband" complete with judging, and an award of its own, for the station that has the most operational improvements over the previous year. This would be in the form of a brief written report on station changes and upgrades, and an on-the-air test. What better way to familiarize ourselves with the our new gear, its operational characteristics, which way is north, and what is really fixed, and what remains to be fixed?

This year's Crying Towel was won by a VHF newcomer, Griff, NE3I. You had to be there to appreciate what great drama unfolded for this "Packrat orphan," left abandoned on 2 meters, listening to the white noise of emptiness, waiting for the rest of the crowd to "run on 95 gigahertz" and return to move him up to 1296. Enter Dick, N3AOG and Ernie, W3KKN to save the day, completing his goal of a dozen QSOs on this new band. Jerome, K3GNC made his case for a second place, with the tale of the UHF antennas that didn't like being stuck on the rotor recently applied to the vent stack at the new QTH. Onto VHF SS 2000: Will you be prepared?

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"WORKED THE MOST PACK RATS" AWARD

de Bob, W2SJ

Hello All, The results of the in the January Vhf SS are as follows:

Grand prize to Jeff Klein, K1TEO with 165 Pack Rat Qso's.

Certificates will be mailed to all other entrants: Chuck, WA2ONK, 137 Qso's, Del, K1UHF, 133, Rich, KD2KS, 111, Jim, KK3K, 31, Craig, K3CWH, 27, Frank, W2FCA, 13. Thanks to all for participating and promoting VHF/UHF & Microwave band activity. This is an annual award and will be available again next year. You can see a picture of the grand prize on the Pack Rat web site www.ij.net/packrats. Tax es 73, Bob, W2SJ, For The Pack Rats

NEW CAC EFFORTS

de Dave Bostedor, N8NQS, Editor, The Great Lakes VHF/UHF Newsletter.

The ARRL CAC has been directed to revisit the Rover Rules issue in the context of whether the current rules are "fair" in the national context. The powers that be have made it clear that we're not going to simply return to the 1993 rules, however they want to determine if the current rules are "fair". I'd appreciate any input from our VHF constituency here in the Great Lakes Division.

I also have some interesting analyses of both the history of rover scores, and also of the most recent January VHF rover competition provided by K5FUV at the ARRL. The first shows factual data that the number of Rover entries has increased almost every year since 1993, so the argument that the current Rover rules has killed activity is simply not true. The second compares three different rover entries - the apparent winner ND3F (not using that call), AB4CR and K7XC from out west. ND3F ran thirteen bands with KWs in the mobile (!). AB4CR made most of his QSOs on ten bands with his wife in another mobile following him around from grid to grid. K7XC was third with only four bands - K5FUV shows that if he had worked the same rover stations that he did, but had only three more bands, he could have walked away with the whole thing! I'd be glad to share this stuff with you if you wish.

The Awards Committee, acting on a recommendation of the Contest Advisory Committee and with input from a survey of last year's entrants in the ARRL 10 GHz and Up Contest, is pleased to announce a change in the operating rules for the annual 10 GHz and Up Contest. Operating times for the contest have been changed to allow participants additional time in the early morning hours. Starting with the 1999 ARRL 10 GHz and Up Contest scheduled for August 21-22 and September 18-19, participants may operate a total of 24 hours each weekend between the starting time of 6:00 AM local time Saturday morning through 12:00 midnight local time Sunday evening. Listening time counts as operating time and times off must be clearly indicated in the log. The complete rules for the ARRL 10 GHz and Up Contest will be printed in the June 1999 issue of QST or may be downloaded from the Contest Branch Web Page at:

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/99/rules-10ghz.html>

CONTEST NEWS RELEASE

The ARRL Awards Committee has voted to accept a Contest Advisory Committee recommendation for the addition of a Single Operator Low Power entry category for VHF Contests, beginning with the January 2000 VHF Sweepstakes. The maximum power limits for the new Single Operator Low Power category will be:

50 MHz and 144 MHz 200 Watts PEP maximum

222 MHz and 432 MHz 100 Watts PEP maximum

902 MHz and above 10 Watts PEP maximum

To qualify under the new category, a station must operate within the maximum power limitations on each band in which they participate. Certificates and awards will be developed for the new category according to the current awards structure. This rule will not affect the current Single Op QRP Portable category. The goal of the new category is to encourage greater participation among the large number of VHF/UHF contest enthusiasts, many of whom can be competitive at lower power levels. For more information, contact Dan Henderson N1ND, Contest Branch Manager, ARRL.

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Conference: Contact John, KB3XG johnkb3xg@aol.com 1-610-584-2489

Speaker list and other information will be on the Pack Rat WEB Page

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Detailed Maps and other info at:

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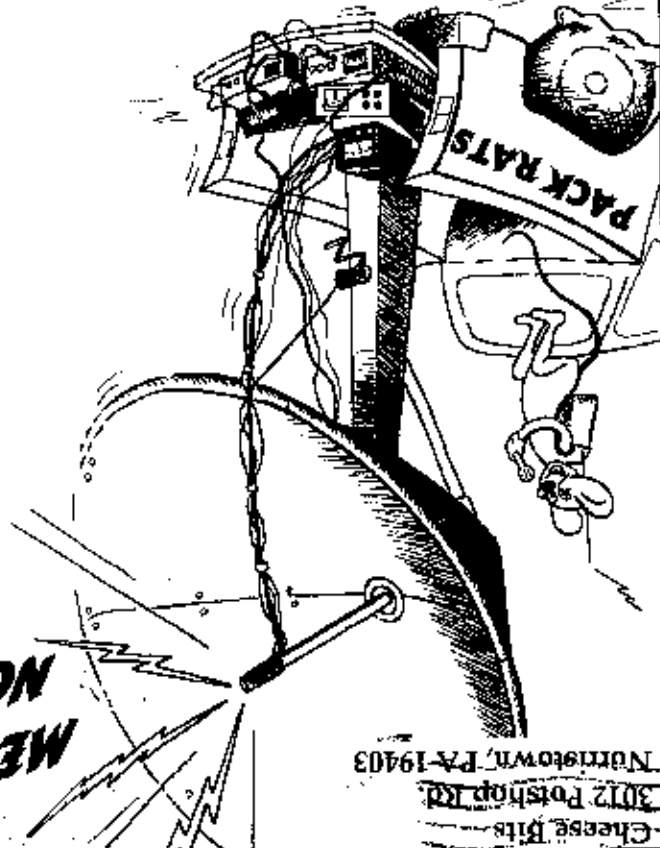
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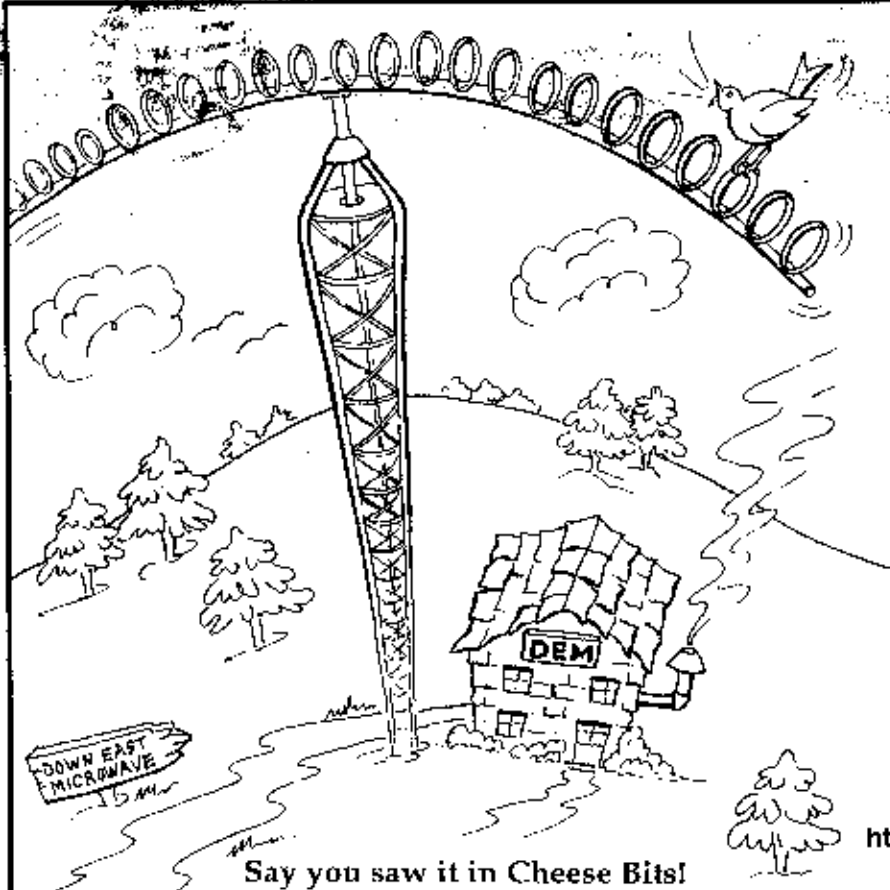
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