



CHEESE BITS

W3CCX
CLUB MEMORIAL CALL

ARRL
Affiliated
Club



Volume LIX

February 2018

Number 2

PREZ SEZ:

Well, 2018 is fast out of the gate. The January VHF contest had several interesting wrinkles. Assistance continued to help find missing Packrats many different ways. Everything from using different sites on the internet to phone calls and text messages was used. Propagation wasn't great but many of us got to work Ken, VO1KVT in GN29. Then there was the elephant in the room – FT8. This helped with the grid square count but some felt might it have depressed the total number of contacts, especially for those running the bands where the points are higher on the higher frequencies. Many at the Contest Wrap Up meeting (held the following Saturday at the QTH of Bob, W2SJ) said FT8 and other digital modes may need some informal guidelines to help optimize the positive effect on scores. Can you think of some ways we can use FT8 to help our scores even more? I'm sure this will be the topic of discussion in the months to come.

Another interesting development is what has been happening at ARRL headquarters. Many in the amateur community felt the ARRL BOD had become less and less open and only official pronouncements were allowed to leave the BOD meetings. Disagreement was not allowed to leave the meeting. Personal opinions were dissuaded outside the meeting. Only the party line was acceptable. Several directors and vice directors were even prevented from running for office or re election – without much detail given.

People were being censored for speaking their minds. I mentioned one web site www.myarrlvoice.com at the January Packrat meeting as possible source of further research into the issues. Many letters from well known clubs and individuals were posted there. Most were business like and well reasoned. To make matters worse, even more stringent restrictions were to be voted on at the ARRL's January meeting. Many amateurs emailed or contacted the ARRL with their thoughts on the matter. The results of the ARRL meeting? The new proposals were tabled. Some of the older restrictions were rescinded and the ARRL CEO Tom Gallager NY2RF resigned. The takeaway on all this is the individual members of the ARRL do have a voice about what the organization does and how it operates but only if we exercise our voice! This matter is not over. There are still some unreasonable restrictions on Board members. Like a democracy it only works if the "citizens" are constantly watchful and let their voice be heard.

This brings up another interesting topic, the Packrat BOD meeting. Any packrat can attend. It is encouraged. BOD meetings allow the business portion of the General meetings meeting to be shorter. Only summary information or those things that need to be brought up for a vote by the general membership find their way to the General meeting. But I strongly encourage members to attend BOD meetings at least once a year. You may even find you want to be a BOD member. We are always looking for packrats who would

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PACKRAT BEACONS - W3CCX/B

FM29Jw Philadelphia, PA
50.080 144.300 222.062 432.290 903.072 1296.264 **2304.043**
3456.200 **5760.195** 10,368.034 MHz (as of 1/17, red = off the air)

MONDAY / TUESDAY NIGHT NETS

VHF/UHF Monday:

TIME	FREQUENCY	NET CONTROL
7:00 PM	224.58R MHz	WR3P FN20kb Ralph
7:30 PM	50.145 MHz	N3RG FM29ki Ray
8:00 PM	144.150 MHz	K3GNC FN20ja Jerome
8:30 PM	222.125 MHz	KB1JEY FN20je Michael
9:00 PM	432.110 MHz	WB2RVX FM29mt Mike

Microwave Tuesday:

7:30 Coordinate QSO's on 144.260 for all Microwave bands you'd like to work. Also setup Q's at w4dex.com/uhfqso or **Packrat Chat Page W3SZ.COM**
Visit the Mt Airy VHF Radio Club at: www.packratvhf.com or www.w3ccx.com

like to help set the direction the club should take in the years to come.



February's meeting is the Packrat Crying Towel night – come with your tail of woe. What went wrong in your shack or your rover. It doesn't have to be a catastrophe

– just try to make it relatable. We have all been there! This should be a fun meeting. And of course, the prize of the evening is a famous Crying Towel complete with an embroidered Packrat suitable for framing and hanging in your shack

The March general meeting will be Homebrew night. The second part of the March meeting will be by Gary, WA2OMY and Michael, KB1JEY. They will have a well stocked table of test equipment. If you have any special requirements email Gary soon.

The April Meeting will host Ed Hare W1RFI from the ARRL with some little known stories from the ARRL lab. Also that night is AWARDS night. Come early and enjoy Dutch Treat dining with Ed Hare and many of your fellow packrats at Giuseppe's Pizza and Family Restaurant around 6:00pm.

June's big event of course is the June contest. W3CCX will be operating from Camelback again. Many of us are going up Friday June 8th for setup. If you can't make the entire weekend consider coming up for a day. If you plan to come up for an hour or two consider bringing a son or daughter or maybe a friend from work. You have to admit, seeing 5 towers with at least 10 antennas and operating vehicles on top of the mountain is an impressive site. How better to entice possible new Hams.

And last, have you found any new projects on the internet? Any new and interesting piece of test equipment? Let your fellow Packrats know about it. I've been having fun with my new MiniVNA Tiny Plus. Not a lot of money, interesting specs and extremely portable.

Bottom line, have some fun, learn more.

Build something.
73, George KA3WXV

Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club, Inc.
'The Packrats'
January 2018 VHF Sweepstakes Contest

Total Logs: 66

Club Claimed Score: 1,981,475

Here's the results of the January Sweepstakes as compiled by W3KM. How did you do? Check it out below. Each frequency cell shows Q's and Grids for that frequency. What can you do to improve for next year? Start planning soon!

Nr	Call	QSO's	Total-Grids	Score	6M	2M	222	432	902/3	1.3 GHz	2.4 GHz	3.4 GHz	5.7 GHz	10 GHz	24 GHz	Laser
1	K1RZ	642	210	316470	164 41	153 42	80 25	99 30	39 18	45 17	26 12	15 9	9 8	12 8		
2	K3TUF	431	114	117762	93 19	92 22	72 20	76 18	25 9	33 10	15 5	12 6	12 4		1 1	
3	N3RG	405	127	115062	102 32	94 26	57 17	68 18	21 9	32 10	8 3	11 5	5 3	6 3		1 1
4	NN3Q/R	312	59	57525	50 7	65 7	43 6	45 7	23 4	24 4	14 4	15 4	15 4	13 4	1 1	4 3
5	WA3DRC	328	69	55407	101 16	60 12	40 7	47 7	17 6	26 6	16 5	12 6	4 2	3 1		2 1
6	W2SJ	333	66	50556	89 13	67 13	49 9	56 9	17 5	27 6	12 4	14 6				2 1
7	WA3GFZ	354	61	50386	94 13	76 10	52 8	54 8	18 5	27 6	14 5	9 3	4 1	4 1		2 1
8	WB2RVX	307	61	49593	91 15	52 8	36 6	41 6	21 5	24 5	16 5	9 3	9 5	6 2		2 1
9	AA2UK	335	102	45900	123 34	97 31	52 17	63 20								
10	WA3QPX	248	96	37920	73 15	92 44	26 11	29 11	12 6	14 7	2 2					
11	K0BAK/R	203	46	33626	35 4	36 4	24 4	26 4	12 4	12 4	12 4	12 4	8 4	8 3		18 3
12	KC2TN	306	61	33428	101 17	79 15	38 10	46 8	14 3	20 5	2 1	5 1				1 1
13	W3SZ	180	49	27048	39 9	29 5	26 5	26 5	12 4	13 4	9 4	9 4	8 4	7 3	1 1	1 1
14	N3YMS	235	62	24180	71 13	63 18	35 10	39 10	9 5	18 6						
15	K3IPM	263	53	23214	103 15	61 14	35 7	40 8	7 3	10 3	4 2	3 1				
16	W2BVH	222	57	23142	45 10	77 14	33 8	35 8	11 6	16 6	5 5					
17	N3FTI	256	75	22500	176 56	36 8	21 6	23 5								
18	W3ICC/R	232	47	20727	48 7	65 10	43 8	49 8		18 5	9 4					
19	K3MD	186	62	16244	50 14	78 22	22 10	27 11		9 5						
20	W3KM	244	47	15839	92 14	71 13	38 9	37 8		6 3						
21	KA3FQS	192	38	14630	43 10	48 7	36 7	33 6	11 2	14 3	3 1	3 1				1 1
22	W2TAG	189	45	11160	119 20	27 10	17 6	18 6		8 3						
23	W3GAD	210	33	10461	47 7	68 11	44 7	49 7								2 1
24	WA3YUE	122	36	9144	25 7	27 6	24 7	23 7	9 3	10 4	4 2					
25	K3JJZ	196	31	8618	59 9	61 8	33 6	42 7								1 1
26	KB2AYU	146	37	8399		65 16	38 10	43 11								
27	K1DS	182	29	8033	37 5	64 9	37 7	37 6		7 2						
28	K3GNC	122	30	7380	22 5	36 8	20 5	28 5		9 3	4 2	3 2				
29	WA3NUF	115	34	5712	51 8	39 10	11 6	6 5	2 1	3 2	2 1	1 1				
30	WX3K	101	37	5439	24 8	31 10	22 10	24 9								
31	NE2U	147	31	5363	72 14	49 11		26 6								
32	KA3WXV	164	25	5300	58 8	58 10	19 3	29 4								
33	N3BBI	150	34	5100	150 34											
34	K1JT	158	31	4898	158 31											
35	WA2FGK	123	39	4797	104 28	19 11										

Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club, Inc. `The Packrats` January 2018 VHF Sweepstakes Contest (cont'd)

Total Logs: 66

Club Claimed Score 1,981,475

Nr	Call	QSO's	Total-Grids	Score	6M	2M	222	432	902/3	1.3 GHz	2.4 GHz	3.4 GHz	5.7 GHz	10 GHz	24 GHz	Laser
36	WA3RLT	147	27	4725	66 10	53 11		28 6								
37	KB3MTW	165	19	4636	53 5	47 6	31 3	27 3		7 2						
38	KB1JEY	155	20	4420	55 6	40 5	29 4	30 4								1 1
39	N2DEQ	127	25	4200	59 12	41 7	10 2	10 2	3 1	4 1						
40	WA3JZN	121	21	2772	98 16	12 2		11 3								
41	W2GTV	112	16	2624	38 3	30 6	20 3	20 3		4 1						
42	WS3O	74	26	2106	43 14	24 9		7 3								
43	K3IUV	89	14	1778	20 3	31 5	22 3	16 3								
44	K1DS/R	83	12	1764	20 3	23 2	20 2	16 2								4 1
45	WA3U	59	19	1634	7 3	25 8	13 4	14 4								
46	K3VEQ	82	19	1558	37 9	45 10										
47	K2WB	73	14	1498	19 4	20 5	16 2	18 3								
48	K3BPP	40	22	1056	16 8	16 10		8 4								
49	KC3ACQ	72	13	936	72 13											
50	K3DMA	39	7	770	4 1	8 1	11 1	6 1	1 1	3 1						6 1
51	NE3I	27	8	384	11 2	7 2	4 2	3 1								2 1
52	WA2DTW	18	10	240	3 2	9 4	3 2	3 2								
53	K3EGE	9	4	160		2 1	2 1	1 1								4 1
54	W3RJW	18	8	144	18 8											
55	K3BFS	18	7	140		16 6		2 1								
56	W3HMS	6	6	72	1 1	1 1	2 2	1 1		1 1						
57	W3FEY	6	3	36			6 3									
58	WA3WUL	2	1	16												2 1
59	N1XKT	-	-	2625												
60	W2KV	-	-	5848												
61	WR3P	-	-	450												
62																
63																

Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club, Inc.
`The Pack Rats`
January 2018 VHF Sweepstakes Contest (cont'd)

Total Logs: 66

Club Claimed Score: 1,981,475

Multi-OPS

Nr	Call	QSO's	Total-Grids	Score	6M	2M	222	432	902/3	1.3 GHz	2.4 GHz	3.4 GHz	5.7 GHz	10 GHz	24/47 GHz	La-ser
1	N3NGE	1092	223	490154	327 61	297 48	125 28	178 31	37 14	51 13	25 8	22 7	15 6	9 4	2 2	4 1
OPS N3NGE K9PW WA3WUL K3EGE N3EXA NE3I																
2	N2NT	749	149	142742	269 52	271 47	101 27	108 23								
OPS N2NT N2NC WW2Y																
3	W0RSJ	344	62	27218	157 23	92 19	42 9	53 11								
OPS W0RSJ W1PV																
4	WA3EHD	236	38	18848	79 11	49 6	34 6	34 5	10 2	12 2	8 2	5 2		1 1		4 1
OPS WA3EHD K3DMA KB3SIG																
5	WB3IGR	109	37	4958	60 14	24 10	14 7	11 6								
OPS WB3IGR WB3LTH																

Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club
January VHF SS
Previous Aggregate Claimed Scores

Year	Logs Submitted	Score
2018	66	1,981,475
2017	65	1,998,637
2016	70	2,238,450
2015	68	2,065,073
2014	68	2,277,747
2013	65	2,659,242
2012	77	2,491,702
2011	67	2,156,784
2010	70	2,699,809
2009	58	1,891,225
2008	63	2,232,731

Previous Aggregate Claimed Scores
(Continued)

Year	Logs Submitted	Score
2007	63	2,055,259
2006	57	2,724,560
2005	53	1,459,052
2004	56	2,856,837
2003	61	3,127,678
2002	49	2,113,624

Mt Airy VHF Radio Club Current + Previous 6 Years Scores by Station

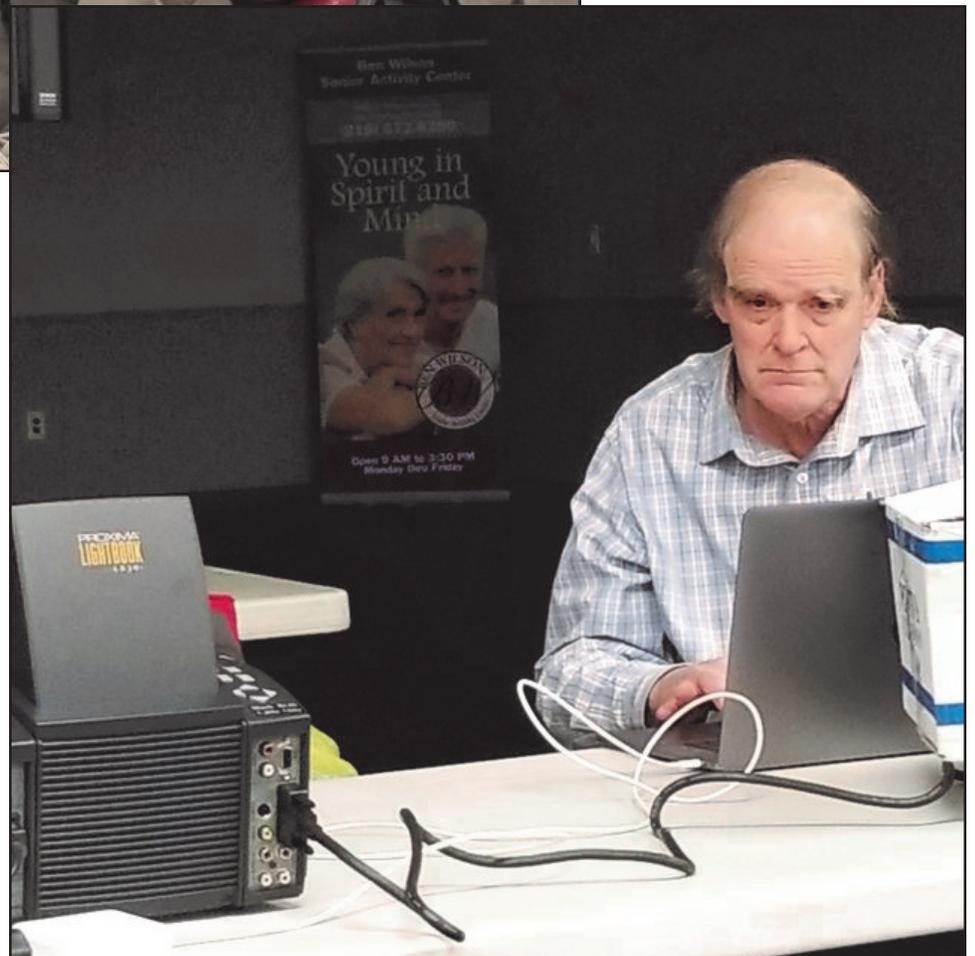
Call	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
N3NGE M	490154	441350	496386	507726	541680	591832	541722
N2NT M	142742						
WORSJ M	27218	29341	55480	35700	28408	50544	43512
WA3EHD M	18848	41160	40866	41256	34680	45980	52399
WB3IGR M	4958	5056	1449	14681	22168	28560	26670
K1RZ	316470	201684					
K3TUF	117762	157505	219675	132582	229330	272384	340091
N3RG	115062	90200	108676	108070	78800	91000	106236
NN3Q/R	57525	66177	96448	71565	76096	110228	42552
WA3DRC	55407	58880	59160	59218	68839	94400	73100
W2SJ	50556	14945	51179	27816	17520	15470	24
WA3GFZ	50386	41608	72504	67375	75768	68526	26049
WB2RVX	49593		162064	230356	203592	199056	65892
AA2UK	45900	16638	280				
WA3QPX	37920	30415	31878	33128	54366	27840	247
K0BAK/R	33626	25921	30240	6480			
KC2TN	33428	13962	30186	35904	37855	15720	28832
W3SZ	27048	52206	111213	45784	33480	185725	83066
N3YMS	24180	30804	41607	24832	44148		69286
K3IPM	23214	107562	93920	88788	82160	87480	111760
W2BVH	23142	25592	10730	9792	18432	14288	16014
N3FTI	22500	42316		40950	22971	1862	931
W3ICC/R	20727	30549	28858	10428			
K3MD	16244	26979	20160	21513	12744	15433	11948
W3KM	15839	12012	20163	8613	11016	14523	4104
KA3FQS	14630	19795	18648	21868	3859	5140	5136
W2TAG	11160	2565	11160	7722	869		4788
W3GAD	10461	19424	52	12258	30576	26688	19823
WA3YUE	9144	14315	10444		16296	8046	1650
K3JJZ	8618	13299	14689	5112	11296	14245	22736
KB2AYU	8399	270		481	6804	90	315
K1DS	8033	1862	748	2520		600	423
K3GNC	7380	47804	48977	38254	26826	34048	
WA3NUF	5712	90902	116730	123156	118085	132496	147854
W2KV	5848	28420					

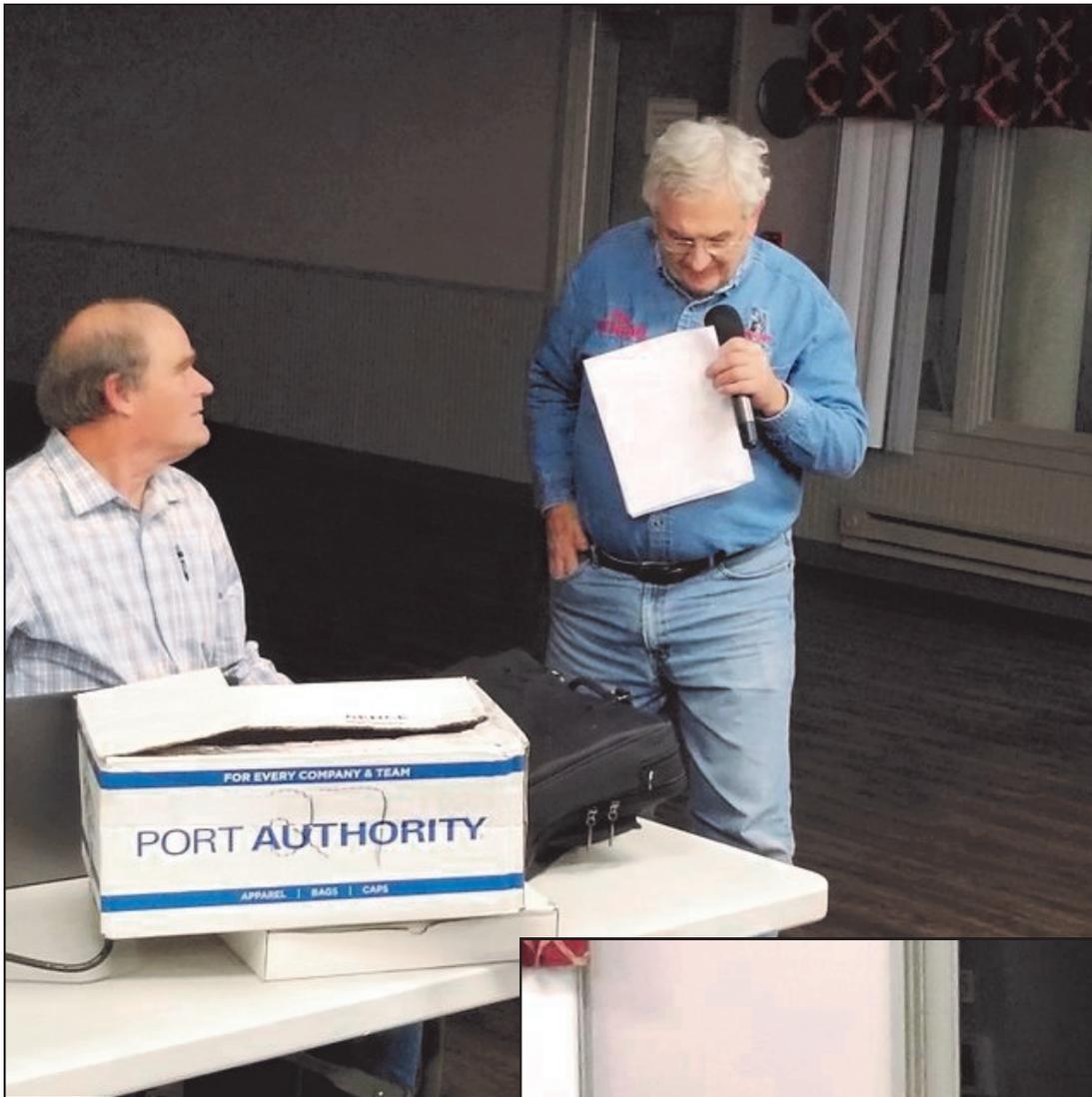
Mt Airy VHF Radio Club Current + Previous 6 Years Scores by Station (cont'd)

Call	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
WX3K	5439						
NE2U	5363	4185					
KA3WXV	5300	6175	5208	5400	3043	3819	7830
N3BBI	5100	9768					
K1JT	4898	988	5612	13188	16714	25728	65940
WA2FGK	4797	2550	42672	21016	184426	116242	
WA3RLT	4725	4818	4968	3116	1110	8704	14872
KB3MTW	4636	6912	8000	6780	4466	1960	795
KB1JEY	4420	3584	7748	7300	6573	6279	9126
N2DEQ	4200	5050	3420	3080	3500		5452
WA3JZN	2772		1904				
N1XKT	2625	2560	4182	2171		50	10040
W2GTV	2624						
WS3O	2106	5148					
K3IUU	1778			744	3553	3553	5170
K1DS/R	1764	76373	52368	87497		100548	136242
WA3U	1634						846
K3VEQ	1558	1710	2550	2227	3591	3630	6120
K2WB	1498		2755	3220			1872
K3BPP	1056	1050	624	576	756		1672
KC3ACQ	936						
K3DMA	770	1364	1430	1540			
WR3P	450	810	1584				
NE3I	384	1188	490	2247	27		5510
WA2DTW	240	520	663	376	864	441	3509
K3EGE	160	730	36	784		328	
W3RJW	144					1276	
K3BFS	140	78	228	448	222	140	913
W3HMS	72	7740	6112	4669	6464	6688	10868
W3FEY	36	24	85	182	217	2352	1241
WA3WUL	16		8	16	24	48	16

JANUARY PRE-CONTEST MEETING PICTURES







Tnx K3JJZ
for Pix

JANUARY CONTEST REPORTS

From Doc W3GAD:

Well the January test is behind us and now on to fixing all the stuff that only works up until starting time for the contest. Thanks to all for putting up with my lousy hearing problems. Thanks too to K0BAK and K3DMA for including W3GAD in your rove schedules the QSO's are a nice addition to a so-so log and the light Q's are always fun even if the other side of the CW is marginal Hi Hi. On to the CRYING TOWEL meeting.

From Joe KC2TN:

Not my best year but not my worst either, but better than last year! Made some progress though! Thanks for all the Q's. Score 33428 on 8 bands + laser.

From Bill AA2UK:

I started out wanting a 30% improvement over last year's score. I ended up almost tripling my last January contest score. I will be adding 902-2304 soon. Score 45900 on 4 bands.

From Al K2UYH:

All I have is material for the crying towel. I had planned to operate on 70 and 23 cm EME. Both Sally and I had come down with the flu while in CA. Nevertheless, I started calling on 1296 and I had one contact. More details at the crying towel.

From Dave K1RZ:

Good contest. WX warmed up a lot from what we had seen the last few weeks. Lots of Rovers were out and the rest of us fixed station so appreciate that. Rovers in my log include N9ZL/R, KD3PD/R, K8GP/R, NN3Q/R, N2SLN/R, W3ICC/R, KF2MR/R, W2RMA/R, AB4CR/R, K2ET/R, KM3G/R, K6PFA/R, VA3ELE/R and VE3OIL/R. Thanks to you Rovers as you drive the excitement level to remain high right to the end of the contest, while we all try to track you. Over all propagation conditions seemed average, generally speaking. Worked VO1KVT on 6m E-Skip. And heard later I missed a big Florida E-Skip opening. Also still working on a good balance between calling CQ's,

using chat pages, plus SSB, CW, MSK144 and FT8 - all the tools in the tool box. I am relatively new to MSK and FT8. What an amazing tool this is. Thanks Joe Taylor and the WSJT Team. I will concentrate next time on using some WSJT modes above 2 meters. And a point that I can't stress enough: We know the Rovers generally don't have the internet connection to chat pages - particularly on some mountain tops, so we fixed stations have to be calling CQ and tuning to find them. Otherwise the band may seem "quiet" to them, and then their interest may decrease. Not a good thing. In the end my score increased 50% from last year. It was great to hear the regular operators plus a number of new operators on the bands too. Thanks again to all for being on. And to ARRL for sponsoring this great contest event.

From Griff NE3I:

NE3I January VHF Deployment. Due to social commitments, my operation on Saturday was limited to about an hour at the old Nike Site in Worchester Township, Montgomery County, vicinity (FN20HE). The high point of the deployment was a pre-contest visit by Rick, K1DS and wife Janni. Rick took the photo. A little later into Contest mode, I moved the tripod to point the antennas in another direction and, forgot to put the tool bag back on to the tripod for stability. A curious local chain saw wood carver stopped by to chat and naturally, the wind chose that moment to pick up, precipitating a new dent to my car. That sent me home.

On Sunday, I had the privilege of participating at Len's with the N3NGE Team. Wow, a real 21st Century MultiStation! Thanks for the Qs. Score 384 on 4 bands + laser.



From John W3HMS:

Very short report. One bad cold -> 6 QSOs. But two football games, HI!!!

From our rover friend Sean WA1TE for K1SIG/R:

14 grids activated, nearly 900 miles of driving. A HUGE thank you to all of the stations that worked us, particularly the ones that stayed with us when all seemed hopeless. We paper logged, so it'll take us a bit to get it all sorted out, but I think we've got about 63 mults over the course of the weekend. The NW corner of our route was pretty rough. Apparently no one lives in FN22,23,33. We're still hoping for a score of between 15k and 20k in the Unlimited Rover category. We were a little worried when we were 2 hours behind schedule and still in NJ when we stopped for the night Saturday, but we were able to make it up and complete our plan on Sunday.

Some highlights:

-My milk-crate microwave box worked REALLY well. We somehow managed FN30 from FN31, when I was expecting it to about make it the 1km required by rules. Big thanks to the stations doing the heavy lifting.

-PVC and zip tie mast survived! Amazingly, so did the \$1.50 Walmart stick on reflectors I jammed on there somewhere in Connecticut.

-Thanks to the nice police lady for not fining me even after I had an AWOL registration when she pulled us over for a dead headlight

-When speaking with WB2VVV on 2m FM, his comment of "You're really strong" and our reply of "well, we better be, we're in your driveway" Thanks for the tour of your shack, Chris, and all 6 bands! Good stuff.

-Catching a VE3 in FN03 on what was probably E's. Short opening, and I also heard but couldn't work a VO1 in GM29.

-Really, just the fact we made all 14 grids. Hopefully FN10 works out, we had one contact while there as it was a bit of a slog in that area. A fairly short stop in a grid at lunch probably wasn't the best plan.

A big thanks again from the K1SIG/R Team (WA1TE, KG6CIH and Sarah) for making it a good one.

From Bill WS3O:

My January contest experience was not spectacular. I had just come home from a trip late Thursday night, and managed to get sick. I was operating up in FN20gx, so I had to set everything up Saturday morning. Being sick sapped me of energy, and setup was difficult. Because of this, I wound up only putting the 2m/70cm and 6m beams up. Thanks to W2RES for helping me get anything in the air. The 2m beam worked once, then stopped. I discovered this while working K3TUF on 144 and 432... with just my feedline. And he heard me too! So, I had to work Saturday and half of Sunday with just 6m. I used the vertical on the car so I could make contacts with K1SIG/R as they drove by on I-80 (see picture). Then I got the beam back down, and found a broken wire to the driven element. Fixed that and got it back up. Working great. Then the 6m beam seemed to stop working, but only to the south. Probably another loose wire that's intermittent. Argh.



From Joe K1JT:

I operated for a little over 10 hours, on 6 meters only, making 158 QSOs in 31 grids. The mode breakdown was 18 SSB QSOs (in the first 15 minutes of the contest), and thereafter 126 FT8 and 14 MSK144 QSOs. For future reference: On 6 meters there was ***lots*** of activity on FT8 and (especially in the morning, as it should be) on MSK144. Using these two modes, nearly every land-based grid within ~1200 miles is in principle workable. There were a few bad digi-mode signals -- overdriven audio, live microphone, etc. -- but fortunately these were a small minority. Some ops were unaware that they should be using "NA VHF Contest" mode, which makes for faster QSOs by eliminating the exchange of signal reports. Score 4,898. (Well, every little bit helps...)

From N2NT (John N2NC, Peter WW2Y ops):

New Harris Platinum 6m amplifier worked like a charm. Converted SB-220 is now the backup amp. Thanks for the QSOs and thanks to the rovers. John N2NC, for the N2NT VHF crew.

From Phil K3TUF:

Remote operation from EL88. I set my goal at 300 qso's and soon realized on Saturday evening, that it was set too low. This was a great test of the remote system which depended on two DSL connections. The link was over subscribed and provided around .002% packet loss over the whole period. Latency was around 100ms most of the time. This made for a very reliable operation. RF wise I was unable to get 10g repaired with all attention being given to the remote operation. Once again the RF worked without a hitch. This has me excited to expand the remote operation for more capabilities next year. I concentrated on working as many of our Packrat club as possible and having fun. Operating from the couch didn't prove to be the most comfortable. I'll have to improve that next year. No special conditions arrived in FN10. Thanks to all the rovers who braved the cold and gave out many many contacts.

From Mike WB2RVX:

Work Sat and daughter's gender reveal party limited time this year. Thanks to the rovers. CU next test. (BTW, it's a girl!).

From Lenny W2BVH:

Had fun working this contest. It was one that required "meat in the seat". Except for a quick opening on 6M to VO1 land, there was not much enhancement. Folks seemed more inclined to run the bands early in the contest this time; something I'm in favor of. My outlook is if there's no Es the best way to get all the Q's is to run the bands right away. Had 5 Qs in 5 different grids this year on 2.3G which was very nice indeed (considering I'm shooting through the trees around 270 degrees of the compass). The Packrat Finder software helped a lot (and I heard a couple of ops say the same: "Hey this thing works"). The Packrat chat room helped get a good few q's as well. This was my first time using WSJT-X and I was very happy to pick up some q's with it. I ran 15 watts on 6 meter WSJT and the low power didn't seem to prevent q's at all.

Protect Your Ham Gear with a Case

If you have acquired some small test or radio gear without a protective case, you could buy a Pelican case. Or you could go to Harbor Freight and pick up one of three sizes of Apache cases. They are often on sale, with or without coupons. The prices are about half of what you would pay for a Pelican case. I get one or two of each size when I go by Harbor Freight to be ready to protect my valuable test gear from China.

The smallest size is big enough for a Bird 43. I have heard horror stories of careless hams accidentally pressing the meter glass in. BTW, using a shorting plug or spare element when not in use is also a good practice to protect the meter on your Birds. The Bird 43 in the photo is the one that Bob W2SJ and I installed the peak-reading option for club use on the 2 meter station. I used the middle size to protect my pair of RF Explorers (signal generator and spectrum analyzer) and the accessory cables, to be ready for a trip.

Customizing the foam to fit is easier than you might think. The middle foam layers are pre-scored in a rectangular grid format. With your fingers, you just pull away the sections where your test instrument goes.

As you can see, Mr. Drake approves.

73, Michael KB1JEY



NN3Q/R Contest Report

By AI, K3WGR

Another great weather year for the rovers, at least in this corner of the country. We were very pleased to have moderate temperatures, and no precipitation.

Our planning for the rove started about two months before the contest. Our 3 Ghz transverter showed signs of receiver failure during the August 220 MHz and up contest. The transverter was bench tested and repaired within a month of the contest. After learning of a possible rove with another rover in the 4 grid corner at Gap we decided to alter our normal January rove and start the contest in Lancaster county. We caught up with AB4CR/r who, as we found out, would be in the Gap area at the start of the contest. We took this opportunity to set up a rover schedule with Jack. While the plans were well laid, unfortunately, AB4CR/r experienced some equipment failure, so the Gap run did not populate the log as expected.

Fortunately with rovers you can easily change routes, destinations, and overall strategy for any reason. We did some minor alterations to our rove and stayed in the four corner grids.

With the availability of FT8 we wanted to make sure the rover van was capable of this new weak signal mode. Our intent was to be able to add distant grids to our log, and score. Little did we know of the complications this would place on our rover laptops. W3SZ was solicited to provide support and education about the various software programs and functions, and mating of the software to do what we wanted. With all the upgrades to the laptops, necessary to handle WSJT-x and the accompanying software to let both N1MM and WSJT-x share a com port, plus the additional logging software (L-P Bridge and JT-X), I am pretty sure the laptop got real confused. One of the laptops froze, the other had issues with losing connection. During the contest we had to revert one of the laptops to allow continually and proper logging.

There were many interruptions leading up to this change that affected the logging, and affecting the score.

N1MM had to be reset numerous times in each grid slowing logging as we had to almost hand log or manually work the radio; and the radio did not follow the software.

This was the first time this happened to us on a rove, and was very stressful. We had a pleasant surprise to meet up with Pete K0BAK/r in Gap on Sunday. We exchanged reports and Pete went back to his schedule and we drove to FM29.

We felt there was a the lack of activity on the bands. This was astonishing as we anticipated a lot of activity. From our point of view, two meters at times was dead. We had the pan adapter set with a 200 KHz window and many times did not see any activity at all. So we stopped by WA3GFZ, Paul's QTH so he could check out 2 meters as we thought the output was low - - the output was not low showing at 320 watts! The receiver was working fine. We never experienced this low activity level before. Our stop in Montgomeryville (FN20) in mid afternoon, Sunday did not produce as it had in the past. Where were the stations??

I feel FT8 has caused dispersal of stations over the spectrum. A lot of the contacts I saw on 6 meters could and should have been done with SSB (very close in grids) - perhaps this is a fad and operators will realize taking one minute to make one contact is a little slow! We made three FT8 contacts, but never saw grids outside the ones we were working on SSB and CW. Packrat Finder worked well, and was especially helpful when changing grids. Packrat Chatroom was busy, we used it to scare up a number of contacts.

Scoring wise we are down from 2017, netting around 53,000 points for our 2018 adventure.

73, -- AI K3WGR and Russ NN3Q

It's All Over But The Crying

By Rick, K1DS

Our Wednesday afternoon flight from West Palm Beach arrived in Philadelphia on time and we headed right for the Hertz shuttle for the rental car. All Nissan Sentra's were lined up for my choice and we hopped in and drove to our Blue Bell home. I had planned to get the rover van inspected just days before the ARRL VHF SS, and I started it up easily and backed it out of the garage. When I stepped out to use the door closer, I noted some drops of green coolant on the ground. Certainly my mechanic would check it out. I drove it to Scott at Motorcar Makeovers, less than a mile from the house.

The fateful call came the next morning at 8:30AM. The radiator was cracked and needed replacement, and a spring in the rear wheel brake assembly had broken. The broken spring caused the drums to score, etc, etc.....only \$1800 to get everything fixed. The "Great White," as I had nicknamed it, was now 24 years old with a mere 139,000 miles on it. I had purchased it in 2004 with 105,000 miles on the odometer. Over the years I replaced the transmission (remember my first outing when all forward gears blew when I tried to get up the Camelback mountain road?), added new tires, put on a new gas tank and did a brake job. Last January I won the US-VE First Place Rover Certificate for the January VHF SS. But now it was time to put it down. Scott reassured me that the items would be fixed and it would resume life as a delivery van in NYC after going to auction. I drove it home to remove all the radios, rotors and cables and drove it back to Motorcar the next morning and handed the keys and title over to Scott. "You're not going to get emotional about this and cry," he said. I shed not a tear. **You have to know when enough is enough.**

Always have a plan B. I threw a quick 6 meter wire dipole together, got a dual 144/432 mag-mount from Michael KB1JEY and also added a 222 vertical that attached to the window of the Nissan Sentra. I took my FT100D to run 6, 2, and 432 and the FM box for 222. I wired a cigarette lighter plug to a PowerPole multi-outlet and powered the rigs. The laptop computer would run on its internal battery. On Saturday I headed to one of my favorite spots in FM29hx, the parking lot of the Community Center in Newtown Square. I used two snow-plow marker fiberglass poles for the dipole that put it 3 feet above the ground. The other antennas were out and I was able to add about 40 QSOs across the four bands before heading back to operate my home station.

My home station is also a compromise using a TS2000x for 6, 2, 432 and 1296 and an IC 375 multimode for 222. The antennas are a G5RV dipole and an LP for 100-1400MHz in the attic. Between the two rigs I was able to squeak out an 8,000 point score.

Sunday morning I headed out with the rental rover to the bank parking lot at the intersection of Stump Road and Bethlehem Pike in Montgomeryville. I was able to add almost another 40 QSOs, bringing my rover total to 1,700 points. Just before shutting down, I travelled to the KB1JEY QTH for a LASER QSO and then on to the WA3EHD QTH, where I encountered not only Jim with his LASER, but also John K3DMA and Al KB3SIG with their LASERs. Wow, 32 more points into the log. At least it's another log entry for the club! As W2SJ reminded me, "We've heard you before, that you were quitting roving." Maybe this time it's for good.



N3RG JANUARY 2018 STORY

I lowered my main tower a month before the contest and replaced the microwave jumper cables with LMR400. I also replaced the microwave rotor loop with LMR600 ultra flex and everything was working just fine. A few weeks later the temperature dropped to -3° and the microwaves stopped working on 902 and 3456mhz! The following week I lowered the tower and replaced the LMR400 cables with four 9913F7 cables and again everything worked fine. However, when trying to raise the tower back to a vertical position, the power winch failed so I did it with the hand winch... that was a task!

After testing the bands from 903mhz to 3456mhz with my weak signal box I decided to run the tower up to 75' and listen for the beacons. With the tower at 75' **Nothing worked!** It turns out the control cable for the Relcom multipole I.F. switch broke somewhere and the switch was stuck in the 1296mhz position. Murphy struck again!

On Thursday, January 18th my friend brought his bucket truck over and I replaced the control cable for the Relcom switch and tested everything. Finally everything was working again on ten bands!

On Saturday morning I agreed to go shopping with my wife... Big mistake! We split the grocery list and I was checked out and waiting at 12:15pm. My wife showed up at the check-out at 1:30pm with at least another 20 items that weren't on her list! Needless to say, we got home at 2:05pm and I hit the seat tired and confused! No game plan, exhausted, and feeling like a deer in the headlights!

So, I turned everything on and started searching and pouncing on six and two meters. Thanks to Roger and the **Packrat Finder** I settled down. But I was running on gut instincts and no real plan. Saturday was a struggle and conditions weren't that good. Saturday night around 11:00pm I turned to the digital modes and worked until 1:15am... Sleep time!

I was up early Sunday morning and ran digital modes until around 8:00am. I worked all day Sunday calling CQ, running the microwaves, and chasing rovers until things got quiet around 10:00pm. So, I decided to run digital modes until the end of the contest. I worked a dozen stations on FT8 before turning my attention to MSK144 with two stations I've worked on several occasions. I couldn't work N0LWF and finally worked KO9A at 04:00:45, so it didn't count!!

I never looked at the summary until the end of the contest and was shocked with the results: 406 QSOs 126 Grids 113,778 pts. I made 35 digital contacts in 22 grids and 16 grids were unique. So the question is... do digital contacts make a difference?



My 2018 VHF Contest Antenna Saga

By Bert, K3IUV

Most of you know that I moved to an HOA community a number of years ago. Unwilling to forego my HAM activities, I elected to “sneak” a short stack of antennas onto my deck a few days before the contest, and remove them a few days after. This was to thwart the HOA “police” that patrol for anything unusual outside the home. My several applications for approval of a small antenna system were denied. I filled in operations with a Rover system on Sundays, for a number of years. Tired of fighting the cold weather, this was going to be the year I finally put a set of antennas in the attic. I started the effort in November, after figuring out a path to get coax from the basement shack to the 2-stories up attic. That was the good news. The bad news is that the runs would be a bit over 100’ each due to snaking from one end of the home to the other. Over a period of several weeks, I ran four coax lines plus rotor cable. Of course I didn’t have 400’ feet of good coax available, so each run ended up using 3 pieces of coax (“Good” coax would be at least 1.2dB loss at 50-MHz, and of course worse as I went up in frequency. But some of the coax pieces I had to use couldn’t be vouched for.)

But I completed the cable runs. Then I opened the attic hatch and peered in. What looked easy several years ago now looked like a tough task as I’ve aged! But a **Packrat never gives up**. I thought, gee, my loft office room is at the same height as the adjacent attic. Why not skin the cat for this year and just install the antennas in my office. I told Harriet to “look the other way.” I had my grandson carry up my homemade outdoor umbrella stand. Made from an old brake drum filled with concrete, it would do nicely as the base. I mounted my HAM-M, with a 6’ piece of mast, to the base. Then I stacked four yagis on the mast. 6-meters, 2-elements; 2-meters, 7-elements; 220, 8-elements; and 432, 15-elements. 6-meters needed a 10’ diameter turning circle; while the others were on 8’ booms. My selected location allowed full rotation of the beams (got pretty close to one wall.) Remember the 6’ mast: That forced (far) less than optimum stacking space. 6 to 2-meter, 18”. 2 to 220, 10”. 220 to 432, 9”. Pictures show the antennas, stacked in my office area and the base, rotor and rotor loop. So how did it work? The answer is “much better than nothing.” I managed to work FN31 and FM19, in addition to all the local grids. My contact count was disappointing. I had lots of “noise” on 6 and 432. While it sounded like in-band birdies, it may have been stuff that was really out of band. The beams behaved like beams, even though they were generally aimed at an interior wall. Connector repairs were easy because I was inside!



Next year’s plans? 1). Find the energy (or a helper) to install the antenna stack in the real attic; 2). Measure the cable loss of each run to verify the loss and cable quality (replace where necessary); 3). borrow / get band filters to see if I can get rid of the birdies; 4). Get set up for FT8, to aid in grid acquisition; and 5) Start earlier! Footnote. This was my 53rd (?) January contest participation.

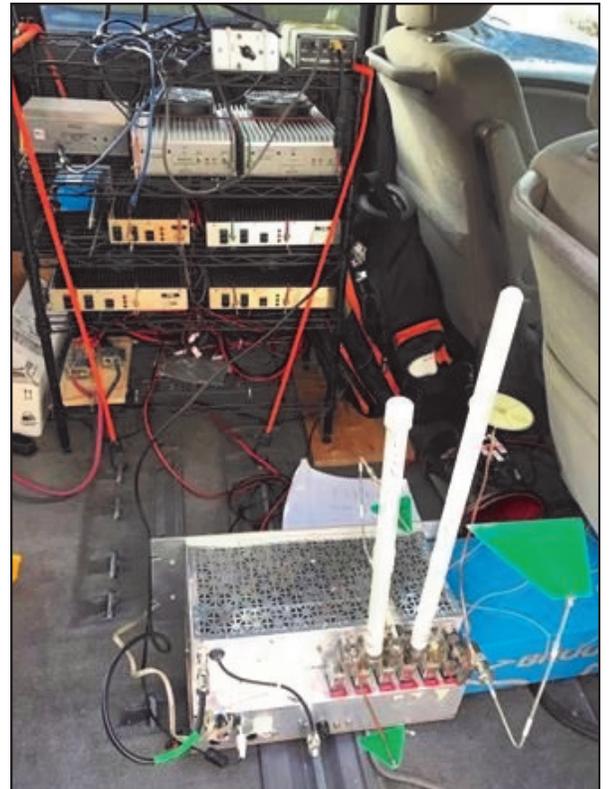


KOBAK/R January Rover Ops

As in the previous two January contests, I roved to Packrat's driveways to make laser and microwave contacts using club equipment. The 6 microwave bands were provided by a single low power box that I'm told is over 20 years old, last checked out and repaired by Paul WA3GFZ before the 2017 contest. It sits on the floor of the minivan. When I go to a driveway, I open the sliding side door to let the weak little microwaves escape. The microwave unit's 2M I.F. comes from a dedicated IC7100 radio backpack system I use for pedestrian portable activations of urban parks in the NPOTA/POTA/WWFF programs. The four low bands use my Limited Rover radio rack with transverters and ~100-200w, driven by a Flex 1500 radio and laptop. To reduce complexity, I used omni antennas on the roof rather than my usual 10' Yagis and a Moxon. Including the laser, I had 11 short-range bands available. Thanks to Bruce WA3YUE for verifying the station on the air at his home Friday afternoon (just after I had built it), which gave me a lot more confidence than I would have had starting the contest cold.



This was the smoothest January contest rove yet. The weather cooperated so I wasn't freezing or wet installing and de-installing the equipment in the minivan; and I wasn't sliding on black ice on the road curves in Amish farm land between Reading and Gap on Saturday night; and I didn't have to adjust my plans to avoid big rain (my cable egress is not waterproof against serious rain). For the first time the microwave box made all expected contacts; in the previous two roves there were always some bands at some driveways that we couldn't make a contact.



As before, I started at Reading's Mount Penn firetower (FN20bi) to make conventional low band contacts when activity should be at its peak. Even allowing for not hearing as well with the omnis compared to Yagis, I was disappointed with the SSB/CW activity. In particular, I was surprised I didn't pick up any grids beyond the four I was traveling to. Later I read multiple threads on VHF-related reflectors bemoaning the use of FT8 for contacts that could easily be made conventionally, so maybe that was the explanation (I don't have FT8 on my laptop computer). The highlight at the firetower was a surprise meeting with my buddy Rob W2HYW. He had set up his motorhome Limited Rover station in the flat area on the other side of the firetower, and I had not noticed him until I was leaving. We spoke briefly and made his 3 bands, but I wish I had more time to talk (a constant regret in these roves). The firetower was open to the public; talking to a couple guys in the club that cares for the tower, they had some knowledge of ham radio and suggested that tower might be used for my antennas like a friend of theirs did once. Interesting idea ... After the firetower operation, the rest of the rove was tightly scheduled to visit laser-capable Packrat's stations. My first stop was Roger W3SZ. I was happy to finally include him in my rove because in the

previous two contests there were either bad road conditions or phone problems that prevented a visit. At this first microwave stop I was relieved that the microwave box was well-behaved, so we maxed out my 11 bands pretty quickly. Roger's station is every bit as impressive and complex as I had expected, and I hope to visit again without the contest time constraints. Some stations are so well-equipped I can never hope to afford it, some are so complicated that I could never hope to build it, and some are so sophisticated I could never hope to operate it. Roger's is all three.

Next up was another impressive station N3NGE. There were fewer guys there than the last two years, but all the stations were manned. I made laser contacts followed by another easy run of the microwave bands. While running the micros with the minivan side door opened, I had two small visitors check out my station; they were especially interested in my battery and DC booster in the back.



From N3NGE in FN20 I drove just over the grid border to the Shady Maple complex (FN10xc). In the previous two years I was able to make 10km contacts on most microwave bands by parking at the old smorgasbord parking lot, with the antennas pointing in the general direction of N3NGE. This year that parking lot was full because of some going-out-of-business sale. I parked at an empty lot a little lower, closer to Rt. 23, but there were some berms in the direction I wanted. Contacting N3NGE on 6m, I was told the microwave station was busy. After he became available, we tried 903 but he could not hear me after a couple tries. Given that I was slipping behind schedule and N3NGE had other stations to work on micros, I decided to move on without trying other bands, missing those additional N3NGE micro contacts I had expected to get again this year.

I drove westward toward a church on a hill that is line-of-sight to K3TUF's station a mile away. Two years ago Phil and I decided I should forego a visit because of icy road conditions, and since the church location enabled us to make microwave contacts, I continue to go back there. This year, Phil was operating his station remote from Florida, but it did not affect our ability to quickly make contacts on all bands except 10G that Phil didn't have. Thanks Phil for remotely operating your superstation, it is the only FN10 station I can get on micros, giving me multipliers I wouldn't have gotten otherwise.

NN3Q/R had sent out a schedule of their plans to do a grid rove with AB4CR/R in Gap grid corner. Alan K3WGR was kind to send me a more detailed NN3Q/R time and location plan, and I had hoped to find one or both rovers down in the Gap area. I headed to the FN10 SE corner location since it was closest, and attempted to exchange phone messages (SMS) with NN3Q/R's published number before and after I got there. I got some very confusing messages back from them, and after calling CQ for a little bit in FN10xa, I decided to go to the FM19 NE corner as my only opportunity to make contacts from that grid. NN3Q/R contacted me via SMS so they could rendezvous at my location. I later learned that they had a difficult day in the rover, so I especially appreciate their willingness to meet up. We made contacts on all 11 bands, which was another major multiplier boost as my only 11 bander in FM19 ... I had no stations on my rove plan in FM19 so NN3Q/R was my only possibility. I made a mental note to see if I can work with those guys next year to hatch a plan to get each other a lot more high-value contacts at a grid corner like Gap.

Next I drove to my usual Gap location just inside of FM29 on Rt. 30, to make sure I got at least the low bands covered on FM29 "just in case". I verified via phone that Paul WA3GFZ was willing to get a relatively late visit, so I drove almost an hour to his place. The windy and shady roads to Paul's home are a hazard when the daytime is above freezing temps and the night is below, but luckily it was warm for January so there wasn't road ice to his place. We completed all 11 bands quickly, and I drove home to finally get to bed a bit before midnight, well after this early-riser normally gets to sleep.

Sunday morning's rove had a couple of changes from last year, to substitute-in stations that can give the club more points, especially those with lasers. My first stop was my first time visiting Tom KA3FQS. We got all 11 bands pretty quickly, and I was impressed how fast Tom could find the random location of my microwave signals. Michelle KB3MTW heard us on 222 and I was glad she sent me a text so we could run the low bands. Michelle asked that we try 1296, but I knew that with my tiny signal from the box pointed the wrong way into the woods at Tom's house that it was impossible.

Doc W3GAD was a bit surprised that I was coming to him next; he said he had not gotten any emails for 3 days so he didn't see my rove schedule. While we made laser and lower band contacts, Doc's microwaves were all offline. A short drive later was Ed WA3DRC, and just as the last two years, Ed was very fast finding me on the microwaves to log all 11 bands. I enjoy seeing Ed's temporary crank-up tower put up for the contest.

Last year I drove to Jim WA3EHD's home but could not reach him by phone or doorbell. This year Jim told me to barge in if he doesn't hear me at the door, so I found a small multiop team in his basement. I made laser contacts with KB3SIG, K3DMA, as well as Jim ... each had their own laser of course. Next I made a 10G contact with Jim through his living room window with his short distance tabletop rig; 10G is more important to Jim than the laser contacts to give him a unique multiplier. We finished up the rest of his 9 bands pretty easily, though it took me 30s or more each time to find him calling me on my conventional (non-SDR) IF radio on the micros. The next stop was Northeast Philadelphia at Elliott K3JJZ's home. While we made a laser contact, Elliott's microwaves were also down so we only made 5 contacts.

The South Jersey rove began with an hour's drive from Elliott's place to Joe KC2TN's home. For the first time in four tries, we made contacts on all four of his microwave bands, for a total of 9 Qs. Joe was a last minute schedule swap with Mike WB2RVX who had a family obligation until 3pm. We made Mike's 11 bands without a problem, and I think Mike had the most accurate tuning of my random high band emissions. Bob W2SJ had a football party ramping up, but there was enough room on the driveway for my minivan where we contacted on his 4 micro bands and laser; we had already gotten low band FM29 contacts Saturday night while I was at WA3GFZ's house.

The last rove stop was down at N3RG around sunset, where Ray showed off several of his musical instruments including his new "grand piano". In the previous two years we sometimes had trouble on one or two bands, but this time all 11 contacts were easy. I was happy I completed my rove schedule, and also happy I would be able to make it back home to join my family to watch (on DVR delay) the underdog Eagles blow out the Vikings. An excellent end to an excellent weekend.



Rove stats and results:
 408 miles driven
 \$70 gas and tolls (no hotel)
 14 stations visited
 21 hours on the road

Band	QSOs	Points	Grids
50	35	35	4
144	36	36	4
222	24	48	4
432	26	52	4
902	12	48	4
1.2G	12	48	4
2.3G	12	96	4
3.4G	12	96	4
5.7G	8	64	4
10G	8	64	3
LIGHT	18	144	3
Bonus			4
Totals	203	731	46
Score		33626	

Contest Wrap-up Meeting Pix



Tnx K3JJZ for Pix!

K3JJZ Antennas All Set For The Contest



Tower shown raised and lowered.

8 Bands on the tower 50 - 3456 MHz) and 2M-FM / 220- FM on the short pole.

Score 8616 with time out for the Eagles game.

K3IPM Contest Setup



On The Bands

By Jerome Byrd – K3GNC

Tropo Scatterings:

For Whom the Bells Tolded – they Tolded for me. I'm bad at quoting Hemmingway, and I was even worse as a January 2018 VHF Contest entrant. Get your box of tissues out ladies and gentlemen, this tale is going to be so sad.

It all started when it became clear that I would be moving from my current apartment to another complex for hopefully the last time. This new complex is vastly superior to my current situation, BUT, there would be zero possibility of putting up antennas on the roof or even the window ledges. And there are no balconies or patios. It looked like I would be out of ham radio again. A longtime friend of mine came to the rescue when he suggested we collaborate on a non-ham-radio related business matter. I suggested that I would need a quieter more personal space to work than I was likely to get in my new apartment. He offered a small unheated room on the third floor (top floor) of his commercial building. I suggested that I would likely spend more time working in said room if I had my ham radio setup. He agreed to let me put ham radio as well as computer equipment in this "office" space, and antennas on the roof. He knew about "HF" bands and "assumed" I would be putting up some wires and perhaps a vertical ground plane antenna. Ten antennas later, with ten feedlines and four rotor and camera cables entering through the one small window, my friend realized that he had miscalculated seriously! He was a good sport and made no fuss, but it was understood "no mas".

I thought getting all the antennas and feed lines up before the winter freeze was the most difficult task, but such was not the case. I am still struggling with getting rigs, amplifiers, rotors, power supplies, preamps and switching circuits working correctly, and then controlling it all via remote control.

The morning of this years' January VHF contest I still needed to install a 432 amp and 1296 amp. Much to my chagrin, I also found through a radio test earlier in the week that something seriously was wrong with my 2 x 36 el 1296 array. My new two-meter antennas also seemed to be underperforming. I spent from morning to sunset, trying various combinations. I was trying to determine if one or both phasing lines were bad, whether one of more antennas wasn't working correctly, etc. I went out to the roof, climbed a small stepladder, changed something, then I would go back inside to test the results. I did this many times! It "seemed" like re-orienting the phasing lines helped "some" on 144 MHz, but nothing seemed to work on 1296 mhz. All cables were new. I was too tired to get the complicated switching working on the 1296 amp so I chalked off that band except for local contacts (5 w). I started the contest around 2300 UTC, but heard almost no activity on 6 meters and little on 2 meters. I checked my computer to see what was happening in the chat-rooms and forums and found I had no internet! I couldn't remember what the digital frequencies were on 6 meters and got little results from cq'ing. As it turned out 6 meters was being wiped out by noise. One of the culprits was the ancient outdoor light fixtures on the building I was in, which could be heard "buzzing". As I ran the bands with the few Packrats I could find, initially things went well. However, on 3456 and 2304 signals sometimes required CW and to my dismay the single key that I had planned on using on the TS2000X and the IC706 MKII wouldn't work on the Icom. I tried every setting in the Icom's menu including reverse. I ended trying to use one paddle like a straight key but that did not work and some of the strangest tone combinations, unearthly in nature, were visited upon the poor hams trying to get my call and grid. When trying to run the bands with Jeff, K1TEO, and getting weak signals reports on 2 meters and barely making it on 6 meters, I knew this year was going to be a total bust. I spent the remainder of Saturday evening up to about midnight re-arranging my station and not contesting. Sunday morning I found

... On the Bands cont'd

I could not hear well on 2 meters due to hash from the power supply. To my dismay, rearranging equipment such that the TS2000x was as far away from the amp and p/s as possible only muted somewhat the level of noise. At that point I had only 432 and 222 working reasonably well. I had no way to track Packrats and other contesters. My contesting ended and I started trying to re-organize the shack that had been thrown together helter-skelter to make the contest start. In the words of the old Brooklyn Dodgers Fans - "Wait until next year".

To aid others in the contests, please edit your QRZ.COM page to at least list your station rundown (see AA2UK, K3TUF, WB2RVX, etc.)

Nets and Schedules: The following is a rundown of the nets and group meetings in the "local area" (<= 250 miles, only nets that don't conflict with the Packrats nets are shown).

Mondays: 2130 local – 1296.110 (group schedule with WA2LTM, K1PXE, WZ1V, N2SLO, WA2ONK, WB2SIH, W2BVH, K3GNC and others. All are welcomed.

Tuesday: 2000 local – "Mud-Toads Net", KD8UD fm17uv net control. 144.175, all are welcomed.

Wednesday: 2030 local - 432,150 – group schedule, WA2LTM, K1PXE, WZ1V, N2SLO, WA2ONK, WB2SIH, K3GNC and others. All are welcomed.

Thursday: 2030 local - 144.250 – N.E.W.S club net, W1COT fn31st net control. All are welcomed

Saturday: 144.205 – 2130 local - Chesapeake Net, W3BFC net control. All are welcomed

Sunday: 1030 local – 144.250, Sunday Morning Memorial Net, Bill AA2TT fn30br net control, all are welcomed, 2030 - - 432,150 – group schedule, WA2LTM, K1PXE, WZ1V, N2SLO, WA2ONK, WB2SIH, K3GNC and others. All are welcomed.

The Lunatic Fringe:

EME is on hold for me. My two meter and 1296 arrays are not working and I am not sure about 432. It will be quite a while before I can do EME remotely and I have little available time to be at the remote site in a timely manner.

EME Tidbits – For the first 6 hours of a moon-pass Europeans stations are available. The next 3 hours are limited to NA and SA. The final 3 hours feature the Pacific islands, AU, ZL, Japan and the far east at the very tail end of moonset.

Until next time please stay/get radioactive!

7 3, Jerome, K3GNC

222 and Up Contest Winners

Congrats to the club for being the club gavel winner of the inaugural 2017 222 and Up distance contest with Dave K1RZ looking like he had the top score for a single op in his section and perhaps overall; Ray N3RG as the top score in his section and Al and Russ in NN3Q/R as the top rover in their section.

Results in Feb 2018 QST p89.

[Kudos, Rick, K1DS](#)

DJ3JJ YouTube Video

You can find a video of Andreas receiving an **SSB** EME transmission by Al K2UYH on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/sCQsh2O5V7E>. He is using a 2.5 M dish. Five other EME stations were copied -- all in EU.

The Wayback Machine

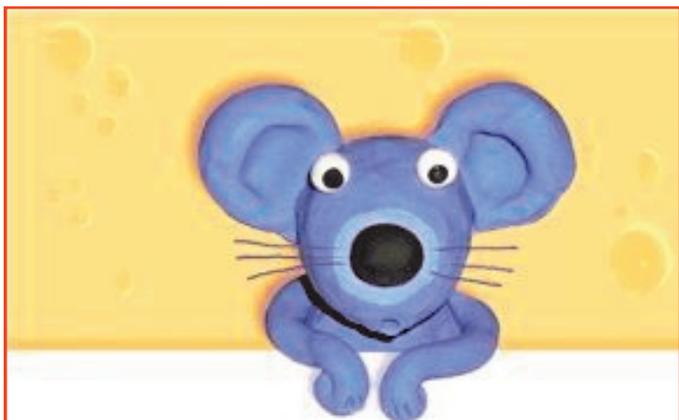
In CHEESE BITS, 50 Years Ago

Nibbles from February 1968. Vol. XI Nr. 2
de Bert, K3IUUV
(author's comments in italics)

- **“Our Prez Sez”.** Dave, W3LHF (later W3ZD) comments on the January contest “There was more going on than I ever remember. Cross mod, interference, power line noise and openings extending as far as New Mexico and Nevada.” “Our top scorers have turned in another top effort ... our middle echelon has shown that our club has strength in depth .. and please note that we even have a few beginners who will place among the leaders of the country.” *(My comment – Cross mod gone, but where was the activity this year? Have the VHF / UHF ranks really diminished that much?)*
 - **Contest comments.** The club submitted **95** logs, with 90 Packrats participating. A list of preliminary scores for about 60 stations was included. *(Included among the top 13 were current members; Stan, K3IPM; Bert, K3IUUV; El, K3JJZ; and Walt, K3BPP. In the middle echelon was Randy, WB2SZK [now NR6CA.] All of the others are now SK.)*
 - **Did You Know?** K3EOD, Al (SK) climbed his 60’ tower at least five times to change his antenna position during the contest, since his rotor was stuck!
 - **ARRL Bulletin 150, 1/13/1968.** The ARRL frequency measuring test is scheduled for Feb 10, 1968. Each participant will receive an individual report comparing his accuracy to that of a “professional” frequency measuring laboratory. *(Still a popular event, but almost*
- unneded with the universal availability of personal frequency standards).*
- **Two Meter Activity Report.** W3LHF, Dave (later W3ZD) reports “I finally got my new VFO tamed, and interfacing properly with the transmitter. Just in time to work a number of stations on aurora openings, one just before New Years, and on the day before the contest! Stations worked ranged from Michigan to Kentucky.”
 - **Humor.** Our frequent contributor, El, K3JJZ offered a humorous article titled “Are you Going to Make it ‘Splode’ Again, Dad?” *(For a good laugh, read the full article in the Cheese Bits copy which I scanned, now posted on the W3CCX.com website*
 - **More Humor.** WA3BIV, Carl, submitted another in his chain of science-fiction Ham radio articles. *(Interesting. Also to be found in the copy posted as above.)*
 - **Public Service.** Frankie, W3SAO and our editor, Helen (xyl of Frankie) were members of the Red Cross support team. Helen gave a lengthy report on their effort during a major fire on January 8th *(the day after the contest)* at the Normandie Hotel, 36th and Ludlow streets. She recounted a lot of detail about the support they provided, and the other happenings at the fire scene. The support extended for two full days.
 - **Meeting Notice.** The February meeting will feature films on HAM activity, made available by the ARRL.
 - **Swap Shoppe.** For sale by Carl, WA3BIV. 100 watt, plate modulated 2-meter transmitter. Driver section needs work. \$5! From H. Candy, WA3CND, a Heath HW29A “Sixer” with power supply (6 or 12

-v input), all manuals and antenna bracket.
“Like new”. \$50.

- **Miscellany.** Postage 12c (two nice 6c Roosevelt stamps) this month (5 sheets 8-1/2” x 14). As in previous editions, many “folksy” comments about members, their families, and activities were included in this edition of Cheese Bits. If interested, or for more detail on the above items, visit www.W3CCX.COM and read the full issue scanned by K3IUUV, and posted there by our Webmaster).



thirty, de K3IUUV

EME from Swaziland

K1DS sent Cheese Bits the URL for a YouTube video (around 18 minutes long) on an EME operation in Swaziland (a country tucked in to the eastern end of South Africa). Check it out:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPumwDezLzk>

Hints and Tips on FT8 Operation

AA2UK sent Cheese Bits the URL for a web site with lots of info on FT8. Check out

http://www.g4ifb.com/html/ft8_tips.html

Packrat Members,

I would like to say Thank You for the gift and cards from the club and members sent during the past few weeks after my father passed away. Good to hear from my hobby during a time dealing with my dad's affairs, and other important issues after my dad's passing.

My mom is moving to assisted living near Lansdale. There are many things to setup and do beforehand, but I hope to return to radio activities in a while.

Thanks and 73,
Gary WA2OMY

Does Your Shack Look Like This?



Ken K2WB sent along this picture to Cheese Bits of a real packrat's nest. Its in a piece of derelict mining equipment in the Arizona desert.

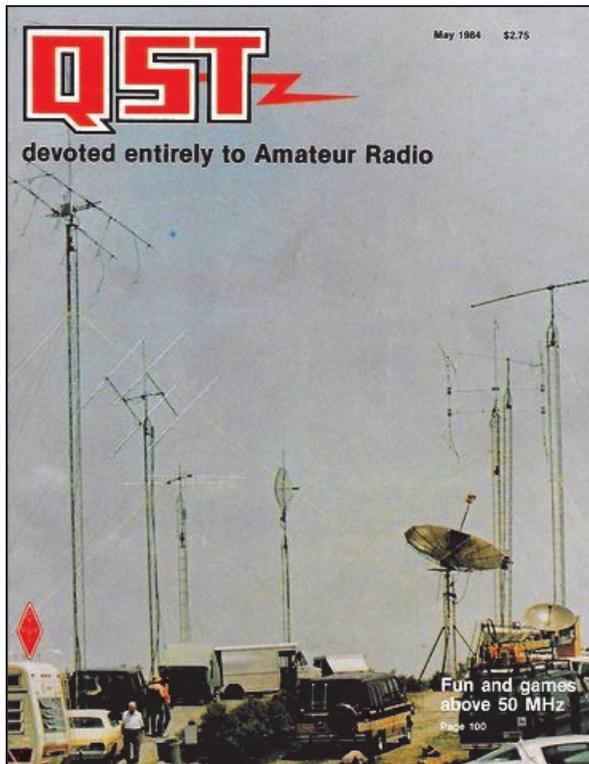
A Tribute to Jim Malone – WA3LBI (SK)

I have known Jim, WA3LBI since he was 16 and I was 18 as members of the Suburban ARC, a Teenage radio club. We did some crazy things together as a bunch of teenagers, but had Ham Radio to keep us straight. I have been taking his passing especially hard and wanted to write a Tribute to him that would have interest for all of us in the club and hopefully something you can include in Cheese Bits.

I'm sure you all remember Jim arriving at the W3CCX 2017 June Contest Site at Camelback Mountain last year with a U-Haul truck and trailer towing his magnificent 2.4 meter dish for 10 GHz EME and all the 125 watt high power RF and computer equipment. He was able to work OK1KIR, Czech Republic during the contest on 10 GHz EME. After that on September 9th, 2017 he went on to set a World EME Record of 18,949.4 km from FM28io in Delaware to VK7MO, in OF76nk, Western Australia. Unfortunately as we all know he became a silent key on January 25, 2018. Jim had numerous accomplishments throughout his professional Electronic News Gathering (ENG) and Amateur Radio Careers. Jim and his company Total RF were awarded 9 Emmy Awards over the years for Technology Innovation and Production. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

As Paul Harvey would have said, "And now for the rest of the story". Back in 1981 or so Jim was a member of the Suburban Amateur Radio Club, K3MTK. About 6 or 8 of his fellow members joined forces with the W3BBS contest group operating the June Contest from Camelback. For the June 1983 contest he envisioned how well a large parabolic dish would improve our range for microwave contacts. He enlisted another club member Mike, WA3PUL a mechanical engineer to design an all aluminum 16 foot dish. The entire dish parts were cut, bent, drilled, bolted, and many heliarc welded at a bucket truck installation shop owned by Bob, WB2YEH (now W2SJ). We all worked on this for about 6 months after hours as our schedules allowed until completion just before the contest. We worked on it so much that our wives named the project "Daisy Dish", hoping we would give them as much attention!

How did it work? It was fitted with 2 horns made from double sided copper clad PCB material soldered together. One for 1296 MHz and the other for 2304 MHz. During the contest we contacted quite a few terrestrial stations on 2304 including our prize catch W8YIO in Ohio. YIO was so strong we changed to SSB



it



and had a ½ hour QSO! The next morning we pointed towards the moon and attempted a contact with AI, WB5LUA (Now W5LUA). We did hear him but were unable to complete the contact. Without Jim's visionary leadership style on this project it would not have happened!

Rest in peace my friend.

Bob, W2SJ

Events

For inclusion, please direct event notices to the editor.

Winter Hamfest - Hamfest - February 24, 2018. Big Flats NY. Sponsored by LIM Contest Group. See <http://www.ka2lim.com/7.html> for details.

Cherryville (NJ) Hamfest - Hamfest - March 10, 2018. Sponsored by Cherryville Repeater Assoc.II. See <http://www.qsl.net/w2cra> for details.

2M Spring Sprint - Contest - April 9, 2018, 7:00-11:00 pm local. See <https://sites.google.com/site/springvhfupsprints/home/2018-information> for details.

222 MHz Spring Sprint - Contest - April 17, 2018, 7:00-11:00 pm local. See <https://sites.google.com/site/springvhfupsprints/home/2018-information> for details.

43rd Eastern VHF / UHF / Microwave Conference - April 21-23, 2018, Manchester CT. Sponsored by N.E.W.S. Details at <http://www.newsvhf.com/vhfconf.html>. Online registration info and registration forms at the web site.

432 MHz Spring Sprint - Contest - April 25, 2018, 7:00-11:00 pm local. See <https://sites.google.com/site/springvhfupsprints/home/2018-information> for details.

Microwave Sprint Sprint - Contest - May 5 2018, 2300Z. See <https://sites.google.com/site/springvhfupsprints/home/2018-information> for details.

EPA Section Convention - May 6, 2018. At Bucks County Community College, Bristol PA. Sponsored by WARC. See <http://k3dn.org> for details.

6M Sprint Sprint - Contest - May 12-13, 2018, 2300Z - 0300Z. See <https://sites.google.com/site/springvhfupsprints/home/2018-information> for details.

HRAC Firecracker Hamfest - Hamfest - June 30, 2018. Harrisburg Area Community College, Harrisburg PA. See <http://www.w3uu.org/>

Eastern VHF / UHF / Microwave Conference Call For Papers

The 2018 Eastern VHF/UHF/Microwave Conference is coming up soon - April 20-22, 2018 in Manchester, CT. Some of you have registered at www.newsvhf.com. If you haven't yet, please join us!

Now we need some speakers and papers. Please consider writing a paper or giving a presentation. It doesn't have to be unique and earth shaking - simple ideas are often a great help to the rest of us. Even a paragraph with a picture for the Proceedings CD is good.

The CD has room for lots of photos and even videos, so take pictures at events or when you are out roving. If you took some last summer, please send them along.

WORKSHOPS - for the last few years, we have had informal workshops on Friday afternoon. If you have an idea for one, send it along. You don't have to lead the workshop, just tell us what you'd like to hear about and we will try and find an expert (or someone who knows a little more, anyway).

73
Paul W1GHZ

K2WB Contest Soap Box

I was only on the air for a short time starting on Sunday, QRT to watch the Eagles slam the Vikings (they should not have this contest on the Football Post Season weekends). Fortunately for me there are no existing commandments for contesting at home (only for Mountain Tops). Otherwise I would have broken the following: 1,2,3, 7 and 8. In spite of that I had fun. **I also learned that my 222 Yagi will not work on 432 and vice versa.** The best part for was Roger's Packrat Finder Utility, I wished more would have fed data into it. I was chasing connected members, which was like shooting fish in a barrel. The only obstacle was propagation in making the contacts. Thank you Roger for such a wonderful utility.

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BNC Wrench - A Useful Tool

Many builders who use BNC jacks on the projects are faced with the problem of how to tighten the nut on the back of the connector without having the connector spin in the hole. Now if you are able to cut D-holes in the chassis the problem is solved as the shape of the hole prevents the connector from turning when you tighten the nut. I, as I suppose is the case with most hobbyists, don't have a punch to make D-holes but I have discovered and received as a Christmas present a solution to the BNC jack tightening problem. It is a BNC Connector Wrench made by Mathews Engineering of Indianapolis, IN. The wrench is pictured below. The wrench works by sliding over the female BNC connector. There are slots machined into the side of the wrench to hold onto the two nubs that protrude from the barrel of the connector.

73, Tom KA3FQS



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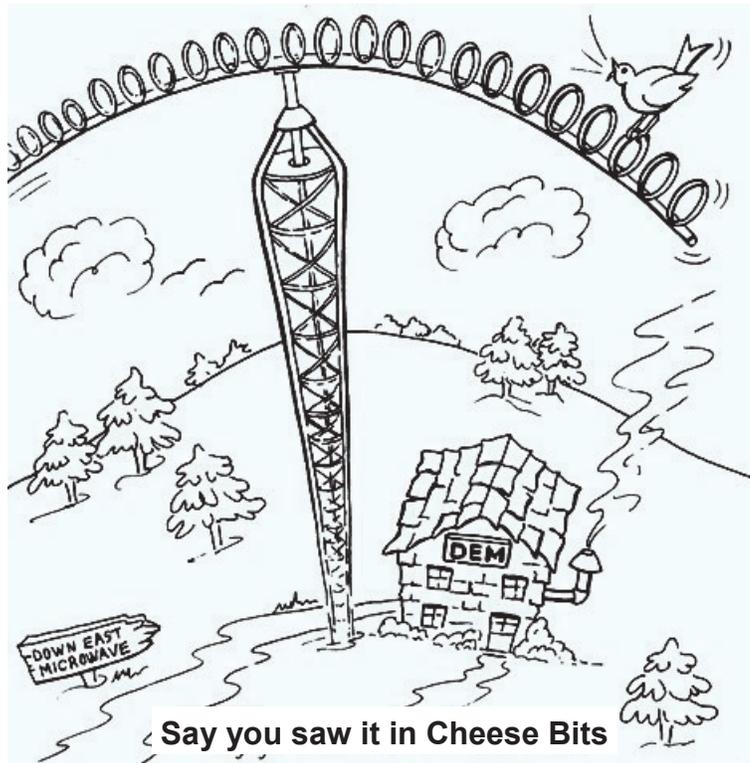
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