

How Real Life Imitates Contesting

By Greg Surma, K8GL

Tuesday afternoon at 5 PM. All is set. Beer count in the 'fridge is known for the big start at 8 PM of Red Wing Hockey!

Anxious to leave work. Then it happens. Staff member walks in and sez that cooling tower for whole building is down, and we're in danger of losing all air conditioning. Crap!

Quick analysis shows that 3 phase spray pump motor is blowing fuses. Substitute 15 amp versions with 25 amp model. Same thing!

Find spare pump and motor. Crack 18" pipe wrench trying to take apart 3" pipe!

Can't find bigger wrench anywhere. It's after 5 PM....usual plumbing company is closed. Red Wings game looks more distant.

Another plumbing outfit in town has 3 experts on cooling towers. None available until 8:30 PM. Yuk! Convince plumber just to bring 3' and 4'

wrenches out; We'll do the rest. He obliges and shows up with BMFW36 and BMFW48. Looking good!

Pry apart 17 years worth of atrophy. Get motor in place. Refill reservoir. 50-50 chance phases are correct, however, must wait for tower to fill to try.

Yes!!!! All works! Tighten and waterproof system. Wash hands. Get in car.....

XYL greets at door "Hasn't started yet!". Walk in living room. Catch opening face off. The rest is history!!..

Has something like this kinda ever happened to any club member getting ready for a contest??

Estimating The Wind at Your QTH

By Tim Mitchell, K9TM
tim.k9tm @ totalink.net



I have been reading a lot on tower and antenna design. Of course besides the performance issues, one wants the things to stay in the air! The books speak of wind speed survival ratings and such.

There was one missing link though. How much wind survival was enough. Of course more is always better. I wanted to know what the conditions were for my area. I asked around and no one seemed to know how to find out this info. I wanted to know the nominal as well as extreme conditions I could expect for Toledo (based on historical data).

I found it tonight, while surfing the net. Thanks to our government and the national weather service, this info is available! It is easy to get and the web sites are well constructed (from the standpoint that I could get the info I was looking for easily).

I am quite surprised by what I found. I will mention the sites in a moment so that you can do some looking of your own. The info I took was from the Toledo Express Airport observation post (since this is close to my house). I used the posted maximum wind gust per month data. Over the last 2 years, the average gust wind speed in MPH for Toledo (by month) was 45 MPH. The max was 59 MPH and the min was 34 MPH. The direction is also given and all but one of the months had the direction as ~240 degrees (one month was 70 degrees). This tells me two things, how much wind and from what direction it is likely to come (in case I want to put the elements or boom into the wind... if it matters).

I also received data from as far back as 1950. Hey, the info was available... so I took it. They have data as far back as like the 1800's.

Perhaps I am analyzing this way too much (hey, I'm an engineer what do you want) but if you ever wondered what the wind speed has been in your area (statistically), here are the places to look:

1. To pick your state and find the field offices for the last 2 years data:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/regions.html>

2. To look at historical data:

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/onlineprod/tfsod/climvis/main.html>

Once you have the field office, this data is under climate (temp, wind, precip, etc). For Ohio the regional office site is:

<http://www.csuohio.edu/nws/climate/climate.html>

From their you can pick the observation post.

Hope someone else finds this info useful and it saves them time searching for it.

Spring Wind Damage

By Tim Eklin, W8JJ
eklin@tir.com.

At 0613 on May 31, 1998 my wife, Jennifer, and I were awakened by strong winds and driving rain. I fumbled around in the dark looking for my hand held 2m radio to check weather conditions. Jennifer headed for the window to have a first hand peek at the storm. As I was tuning around looking for the weather net she said, "I think your antenna is broken." I casually wondered the window thinking maybe an element or two had fallen in the yard. Well, as you can see, she knows a little something about antennas. It was definitely broken!

The storm produced straight line winds in the 70 mph range according to local news reports. The storm destroyed the HyGain 52' crank up tower, TH-7 tri-bander, Cushcraft 40m rotatable dipole, Ham IV rotator, and mast pipe.

Following a settlement of the insurance claim, I will begin the process of rebuilding. Hopefully, the new and improved W8JJ antenna system will boost the contest scores a bit. I am considering 70' of Rohn 45 pier pinned on the same concrete base with a Force 12 C4XL or TH-7. What would you do if you were starting from ground zero on a 1 acre lot? Your comments and suggestions would be appreciated.



W8JJ's Fold-over Tower

Observations From A "Developing Gun"

By Dennis Ward, KT8X

I was first licensed in 1979 using an Allied Knight Kit receiver and a Johnson Viking Navigator transmitter with a 40 meter inverted Vee. On and off, contesting has captured my operating time. There has been quite a lot of discussion in the flash, on the air, and on the MRRC reflector recently regarding club activity, and direction. Although I haven't been a member of MRRC for all that long, I'd like to offer our less known, smaller stations some advice from someone who isn't well known, and until recently couldn't work DX unless no one else was on the band!

What to do with a station that isn't Big Gun Caliber?

- Get on the contest in S&P mode, take your time. If you don't work them after a couple calls, move on. By Sunday they will be begging for you.
- Spot, Spot, Spot and Spot some more.
- Operate with a multi-single or multi-multi group. (Okay, some of you big stations, maybe we should step back and get some of those guys at your place with experienced ops to help?)
- Use a club station if available - I did many from W8SH while a student at MSU. I believe our Fish, KU8E, did many contests from W8LT at OSU.
- Work stations the weekend before, so they recognize your call.
- Pick your bands and modes in advance for optimum performance - look at openings from 4 weeks prior the contest weekend for clues.

How to upgrade your station?

In the last year, I have put together a station that I can at least run with on 10,15, and 20. What a thrill during ARRL CW to actually run rate from home - first time ever in 18 years! (not including DX locations) My approach was the following to start with - I still have a ways to go.

- Get a decent rig with good filters and easy band switching. I gave up my TS-830S after 14 faithful years to purchase a IC-765 - Wow! What a difference. Dual 250 Hz filters are a must for the congested bands.
- Decide what bands need the most help - 10,15, & 20 are the easiest, that's where I started. I decided on a single tower installation and spent last Dayton researching antennas. The guys who attended the antenna forum all told me I made the best choice - KT34XA. It's a big antenna, but the specs stood out clearly. So, decide on the largest antenna you can live with and get it. Decent antennas are the key - I still need to work on the low bands.
- If you have room on your tower, look around for a cheap used tribander of A3 or TA33 vintage. Put it up around the 45 foot level - if possible and fix it SE. This is the best bet for working those calling Caribbean stations or South Americans.
- Use good feedline - RG213 or hardline if available - with decent connectors (Amphenol for the 213)
- Stay within your budget - Rome wasn't built in a day.
- I believe the last step is to buy a good amplifier. Even an SB200 is great, that means an almost 9dB increase in your signal. Ensure you have good clean AC to run the amp with.
- Now that you have a decent station - Run with the big dogs on your best bands and continue to use the tips above.

What can I do to contribute?

(Continued on page 8)

Recently, the question was posed on the MRRC Reflector "What do MRRC members want from contesting?" Below are some of the member's responses, edited for brevity.

de Tim, K9TM

I am in the process of fixing up my station to get ready for next contest season. My primary focus from home is stateside contests. I live on a city lot and have all the city problems. I have a 64' tower on order and plan to put my KT34XA and 40-2CD up for this fall, with dipoles for 80m and 160m. I have an FT1000D and IC756 and have the station set-up with Top-Ten band decoders and relays as well as Dunestar bandpass filters. I am all set for single-op two radio.

I am planning an assault on the stateside contests this year. Mainly NAQP, Sprint and SS. I am also considering playing more with RTTY contests (a little change of pace). I don't want to do much in the way of DX contests from my place. I would rather go be the DX. The goal is to get in one or possibly two trips a year. The other thing I would like to do more of is multi-ops for the DX contests.

I am not really fond of the Sprint. It does not suit the way I like to operate (run baby run!!! rate rate rate). I am not a S&P op. So I am forcing myself to do the sprint to make me a better S&P op. I have no chance of winning it but it will help me be more competitive in other contests.

One other thing I am tinkering with is VHF/UHF. I have 6m on the IC756 and at Dayton I picked up a 2m xvrtr. We'll see how it goes.

de Goose, W8AV

I spend a great deal of time trying to make the W8AV station more and more competitive for contesting. However, in the last few years casual operating and even some contesting at the station has taken a back seat to other domestic duties such as gardening and yard work.

What does W8AV want from contesting? I have always dreamed of winning a major contest. However attracting the operators to pull such a thing off is difficult and it tends to deplete the pool of potential single-op entries for the club in the contests. So, I guess that the real goal is to bury the Ohio competition (read K8AZ) in CQWW and the ARRL CW. However, one important thing that has always been a rule at W8AV is that contesting first and foremost is meant to be fun.

As a station that operates primarily the CW contests, we don't have much of a presence when it comes to SSB. Being married, it is sometimes a problem to come home and announce to the non-radio-friendly XYL that there is going to be someone in the basement all weekend doing a radio contest. I am open to entertaining a single op that is willing to come over and put the station on the air for SSB. With some advance notice, it could be possible to make this happen.

I too enjoy the single-op categories in SS and did my first single-op in WPX this year for the first time in over ten years. But I have chosen to be multtop (i.e. single-op plus packet) in SS over the last few years to gain the coveted clean sweep and generate more points for the club.

I would like to see MRRC win more gavels in contests over the next few years. I would also like us to be able to shake the "doormat-of contesting" reputation, for lack of a better term, that we have somehow seemed to have earned with the ARRL and other contesting clubs. I think that we are on our way, but we need to do a lot more work. If some operator training is necessary to accomplish this goal, we are willing to step in and

de Gary, AF8A

Good runs - Nothing in Ham Radio beats seeing the rate meter climb as the Europeans or JAs come pounding in. Whether it's from home, running 100W and a vertical, or from W8AV's megastation, what's better than seeing the rate meter climb?

A good time away from life's little annoyances - Like the overdue project at work, the dead grass in the yard, or the mother-in-law's impending visit. All that goes away when the 'phones are slipped on and the big switch is thrown. Even better are the multi-ops, when a break from the rig is a chance to swap stories (and the latest jokes).

An excuse to build more gadgets for the shack - I treasure my time in the workshop, as much as do my time on the air. I can't recall how many CW interfaces I've built for NA, or how many coax jumpers I've built over the years, but there have been plenty. Contesting provides the drive to constantly improve, hence the need to always be designing and building.

de Jeff, KU8E

What attracted me to contesting is the competitive nature and feeling of comradeship that exists between testers. I was always involved in competitive sports when I was a kid so radio contesting was a perfect fit for me. Lucky for me, when I was an 17 year old kid a guy named Jim Stahl, K8MR, was my 'contesting elmer' and fueled my enthusiasm for contesting.

Joining Mad River opened the door to meeting some of the big testers is this part of country. I absorbed all I could these guys from operating strategy to how to work on towers. In the early 80's I became friends with W8FN, which soon led to a invitation to operate from KS8S. Later Randy and myself contested from his place until 1990 or so when I hooked up with the W8AV (WD8LLD) crew.

As you can see the social part of the contesting has been the big draw for me. I never really have been into doing single ops. (except for SS and Sprints) I have never been interested in multi-ops that are so intense on winning that it took the fun out of the it. Lucky, the W8AV crew puts having fun before winning which suits me fine. I value all the friendships I have made with my contesting friends over the years.

de Dave, K8CC

My main interests in amateur radio are contesting and building stuff for contesting. While I've done a lot of single op in the past, these days it's mostly limited to SS CW which I still enjoy running myself. I have the most fun hosting multiop efforts by teams comprised of MRRC members, with points going to the club score. A close second is hosting guest ops by MRRC members who might not have equivalent capability at their home stations.

I've recently rekindled an interest in operating from DX locations. I really enjoy planning and executing such trips, and have had fun swapping ideas about equipment which can be readily transported. I have slowly been acquiring such gear and would like to make at least one contest-expedition per year, preferably with a MRRC group.

What do I want from MRRC? Number one is the comradeship of like-minded amateurs in pursuit of similar goals. Number two would be for club members to support the K8CC multi-op efforts by coming to operate, spotting DX, or assisting with antenna work. Third, I would like to see our schedule of meetings expanded with at least two in Michigan to reflect the topography of our membership. Finally, I think the club needs a permanent, organized awards program to recognize individual and team contesting achievement. More focus should be made on the MRRC

Treasurer's Report

By Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC
ke8oc@mediaone.net



We've not had an accounting of the Dayton Suite from W8AV (hint, hint) so expenses from the Hamvention will be reported next month. However, since the suite did not cost us anything this year, we should look just fine.

Remember, **DUES ARE DUE** as of Dayton, so check the roster!

<u>Balance from 5/98</u>	\$335.42
<u>Income</u>	
Dues from Dayton	\$476.00
<u>Expenses</u>	
Checking Acct Maintenance	\$ 12.00
FLASH Printing	\$ 87.00
<u>Balance 7/98</u>	\$712.42

Respectfully Submitted,
Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC

"Developing Gun" (continued)

- Operate, and then operate some more. Let's make it a club goal for everyone to try and operate the ARRL contests this year and grab the gavel. If you are on email, subscribe to the MRRC reflector.
- Try and get on the 3825 net more often - This is one that I have to do more of.
- Attend at least 2 meetings, and speak up when you are there.
- Ask others for help and advice on improving your station or operating skills - we all have good ideas and there is always room for improvement.
- Help another member with their upgrade project - especially if you are going to operate at their station next season.

The bottom line is try and do what you can. You don't need a big station, and you don't need lots of time. Yes work gets in the way, it always seems to for me, but even a couple hours is better than nothing. After one season, your skills will have dramatically improved, and you'll be thinking of ways to upgrade your station to be more competitive at home.



MAD RIVER RADIO CLUB
Dave Pruett, K8CC
2727 Harris Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48198 USA

MAD RIVER RADIO CLUB OFFICERS

President:
Jeff Clarke, KU8E
2896 Minerva Avenue
Columbus, OH 43231
(614) 895-9840
ku8e@worldnet.att.net

Treasurer:
Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC
39991 Finley Drive
Canton, MI 48188
(734) 397-9732
ke8oc@aol.com

Scorekeeper:
Jim Stahl, K8MR
30499 Jackson Road
Chagrin Falls, OH 44022
(330) 831-6954
k8mr@barf80.nshore.org

Editor:
Dave Pruett, K8CC
2727 Harris Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
(734) 481-0755
k8cc@ix.netcom.com