

Big Fish

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"railroad", or election of officers. Last year I boarded the train and it's been a great ride. As announced at the K8CC Cabin Fever meeting, I am unable to serve you for another year due to personal circumstances. As is club tradition, I will come to the Dayton meeting prepared to nominate a potential successor for your consideration, and nominations will be accepted from the floor as well.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at Dayton. Remember to sign up for a 2 hour SITS block, and that also means bring your stuff to sell!

2003 MiQP Progress Report

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By all measures the 2003 running of the Michigan QSO Party appears to have been a great success. As I write this, we still have a week to go before the log submittal deadline and we have already received 25% more entries than 2002! The deadline is the May 20, 2003 which is Tuesday after Dayton. If you were active in MiQP, please submit your log by the deadline. We want to recognize everyone who contributed to this year's success.

Log checking will not begin until after the submittal deadline, but from brief glimpses at the incoming logs it appears that there should be quite a few new records set and some heated competition in many of the categories.

Running the MiQP is not a one man job, and I want to thank vice-chairmen **Ted-K8AQM**, **Hank-K8DD**, and Awards Manager **Mike-WD8S** for their efforts. Special mention goes to MiQP Communications Manager **Mark-NU8Z** for the blizzard of e-mails he sent to raise awareness for MiQP 2003. Perhaps in the future we should refer to him as "Spam-Master Mark".

One big improvement for 2003 should be a more timely publishing of the results. We expect to have the results up on the MiQP web site (<http://www.miqp.org>, or via link from the MRRRC web site) by early August.

MRRRC At Dayton 2003

Dayton is a very important part of the MRRRC year. For the benefit of planning your weekend, the various club activities over the Hamvention weekend are described below:

SUITE IN THE SUN (SITS) - Several years ago, when MRRRC decided to abandon it's high cost hospitality suite at the Crowne Plaza downtown, K8CC mused that perhaps we should have a suite out in the fleamarket instead. From this humble beginning began this annual club tradition. During the fleamarket hours on Friday and Saturday, the SITS will be open in our usual three spots (numbers 3858-3860) which are on the east side of the fleamarket about three rows from the back. There will be a canopy shelter, cold soft drinks and places to sit and rest your feet for a while. The club will also have tables for members to sell items, and members can also stash purchased items in the mini-van on site for later retrieval. There is a need to have club members to man the SITS in shifts of an hour or (preferably) two. Please volunteer for a slot by dropping an e-mail to K8MR at jimk8mr@aol.com.

CONTESTERS SUPER SUITE - In conjunction with our friends from the North Coast Contesters and the Frankford Radio Club, MRRRC sponsors a hospitality suite at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Dayton on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. There is a cash bar, and you can spend the evening chewing the rag with well known contesters from around the world. The action begins around 9:00 and runs well into the night.

MRRRC MEETING - The most important MRRRC activity at Dayton is the official club meeting, which starts at 12:00 noon on Saturday, and is held in the stands of Hara Arena above the Cushcraft booth. This meeting is important because this is when the club holds the annual election of officers, and usually conducts it's significant annual business. Dayton is also the start of the club's fiscal year, so dues become due at this meeting.

MRRRC Challenge Update

de KT8X

The Dayton meeting is when we try to announce the winner of the annual MRRRC Challenge. However, this year the results from the last eligible contest (the August 2002 NAQPs) have not yet been published. Once these results have been made public, we will finalize the Challenge scoring and announce the club winner. We apologize for the inconvenience due to this delay.

An Unusual 10M Opening

By Joe Zdrojowy, NY1S

Propagation, although not as great as at the peak of the sunspot cycle, sure provided an enjoyable experience in the ARRL 10 Meter Contest in 2002. From the reports I have seen on the CQ-Contest reflector, there were many opportunities to take advantage of the various propagation modes. Many stations mentioned Es, tropo, aurora and skew path in their score postings. Here, on the coast of Maine, I experienced an opening I never expected.

Unable to sleep Saturday morning, I went to the shack and turned on the radios at 4 AM expecting to catch up on the "QSL pile-up" while waiting for the morning opening to Europe to begin at 1100Z. To my surprise, I found the band already open at 0900Z! A quick scan of the CW portion revealed European stations working European stations. Most of the stations heard all were around S5 with no fading. Typically, the morning European opening begins as a one-way propagation event. I can hear them slowly rising in signal strength but cannot work them yet. By 1115Z, the big guns on the continent begin to turn their beams toward NA and the fun begins. This opening was different. Not only was it two hours early, the signals were already strong. There is no point in trying to run this early in the morning to EU with 100 watts and a tri-bander at 30 ft so I elected to S&P the CW portion of the band.

The first few attempts yielded no results. With the Europeans working each other, I just wasn't able to compete with their big signals. I decided to slow down and pay more attention to how I placed my call in the fray. This worked! I started getting responses. Many of the responses were "?Y1S". I suspect that Europe didn't know the opening existed yet. Once they heard ME in my exchange, they got it the call correct. I spent the next 45 minutes running up and down the band carefully placing my call. A look at the log reveals that the opening was primarily to European Russia. However, I was also able to work A61AJ. Here is an abstract from the log:

0905Z OK2ZU	0929Z RW4LC
0906Z 9A4PA	0930Z RK3BX
0911Z RU4HP	0931Z UA3Q
0913Z UA3DPX	0934Z RZ3AZ
0914Z RF3A	0936Z UA3DKT
0915Z RA3FO	0938Z UA3ABJ
0924Z ES5QX	0941Z UA3DEE
0925Z A61AJ	0946Z UA1ARX

The opening quickly faded after 0946Z. In just a few minutes, the entire band shutdown but once again

opened shortly after sunrise at 1100Z.

K1AM in RI also stumbled into this opening. He reports that he was able to work RF3A, 4L8A, OD5/OK1MU, ZC4DW, UN5J and others before the opening died. VE7SI in BC reports on the reflector that, he too, caught an early Saturday opening two hours before sunrise. That report may be the key to this opening. It seems that all three of us caught an opening 2 hours before sunrise. Could it be that the opening ran two hours ahead of the sunrise terminator?

I got up at 3 AM Sunday morning to try and catch the opening again. It never materialized.

I owe a special thank you to Dennis, KT8X, for encouraging me to explore this opening and to share my thoughts about it with you. I also wish to give credit to Jeff, K1AM and Steve, VE7SL for posting their experiences on this unusual opening. Bill, K1SE, was instrumental in helping me find Jeff's post. The links to both posts appear below:

http://lists.contesting.com/_3830/2002-December/045048.html

http://lists.contesting.com/_3830/2002-December/045105.html

P.S. Thanks to all MRRRC members who have worked me in the many contests we have been in together.

June VHF QSO Party

By Dave Pruett, K8CC

More and more transceivers are coming equipped with the capability to operate one or more VHF bands. Many MRRCCers have purchased such radios, yet few of us have ventured forth to try these bands.

A common complaint is that the VHF bands have low levels of activity, however VHF contest weekends provide a guaranteed increase in stations to work. For the beginning or casual VHFer, this is a great opportunity to try out the higher frequencies.

The June VHF QSO Party coming up on June 14-16 is the most popular of the VHF contests. The reason for this is that June is typically the best time of year for E-skip on 6 meters, and this generally raises the participation level on all bands.

It's been my experience that while you can probably load up anything and make *some* VHF contest QSOs, you'll have a lot more success (and a lot more fun) with *real* antennas, even if they are simple. Height above ground and being clear of trees and

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June VHF

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foilage also helps.

In the June contest, the band with most activity is usually a tossup between 6M and 2M. If E-skip is raging, 6M will be the band with openings over wide areas. If not, 2M will have a slow, if steady diet of stations to work with occasional long skip. The next band offered by most radios is usually 70 cm, but this band has lower activity levels than 6M or 2M.

For the new VHFer wanting to get on 6M, a small beam fed with decent feedline is a great investment. For those wanting less

commitment, a simple 6M dipole (perhaps fed with a feedline borrowed from an adjacent HF antenna) will do almost as well.

On 2M, investing in a small beam will be well worth your time. Verticals used on 2M FM perform miserably for weak-signal work due to polarization mismatch. Cushcraft offers the small, end-mounted A270-10S yagi, which has 5L on 2M plus 5L on 70 cm using a single feedline and retails for \$100.

Like the HF bands, power helps make the difficult QSOs on VHF. Most of the new VHF radios run 100W on 6M, 50W or so on 2M and 20W on 70 cm. With these power levels and "real" antennas,

you'll work most everything you hear except on 70 cm, and even then lots of QSOs are possible.

If you like NAQP with the band-multiplier scoring and QSYing, you'll love VHF contests. Expect to be asked "do you have other bands" with every QSO.

Activity levels in VHF contests vary during the day. The best times are at the start of the contest, early morning on Sunday, and both evenings.

With Dayton around the corner, you might add to your shopping list the bits and pieces you need to put together your VHF station. We'll be looking for you during the contest weekend!

Club Resources

The Mad River Radio Club is an ARRL affiliated club of amateur radio contesting enthusiasts. The club is centered near Findlay, OH and serves Ohio and the surrounding States. Membership is open to anyone.

The **Flash** is the official newsletter of MRRRC and is published six times per year. Submission of material for publication is welcome. It may be sent to the editor at the postal or e-mail address shown at right. The **Flash** may be reprinted in whole or in part provided proper credit is given.

Club dues are \$12 per year, payable after the 1st of May each year with a grace period thru 31st of July each year. Members of the same family living at the same address may elect to receive a single Flash for one set of dues. Fulltime students are eligible for dues at half price. Dues are to be paid to the treasurer at the address shown above. Please make checks payable to *Mad River Radio Club*.

The club roster appears annually in the October/November issue of the **Flash**.

The Mad River Net is held on Monday nights at 8:30 PM Eastern time on 3825 KHz.

The MRRRC web site is <http://www.mrrc.net>.

Keep up with MRRRC happenings by subscribing to the MRRRC Internet Reflector. To join send an email to mrrc-re-quest@contesting.com. The body of the message should include "subscribe mrrc yourcall".

K8MAD is the club callsign of the Mad River Radio Club.

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