

FLASH



The Official Newsletter of the Mad River Radio Club

December / January 1996

MRRC CALENDAR

January 6

- MRRC Meeting at K8MR

January 13-14

- North American QSO Party (CW)

January 20-22

- North American QSO Party (SSB)
- ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes

January 27-28

- CQ 160M Contest (CW)



NEXT MRRC MEETING

The next meeting of the Mad River Radio Club will be at the QTH of Jim Stahl, K8MR in Orange Village, OH on Saturday, January 6, 1996. This is the nineteenth year that Jim has been hosting this post-holiday kickoff to the MRRC calendar year, and is well worth the drive to suburban Cleveland. A map to K8MR is included in this newsletter.

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The 12-1311 is the official newsletter of the Mada River Radio Class,	会会会会
☆ The Mad River Radio Club is an ARRL-affiliated club of amateur radio contesting enthusiasts. The club area is centered on Findlay, OH, and serves the surrounding states. Membership in the MRRC is open to anyone. Dues are \$12 per year, payable to club reasurer KE8OC. Please make checks out to Tim O'Sullivan.	公公公公
In addition to six in-person meetings per year, MRRC has an informal net every Monday evening at 8:30 PM Eastern time on 3825 KHz ± QRM. Everyone is welcome to check in for the latest club news and information.	合合合合

From the 'Big Fish'

By Goose Steingass, WD8LLD

Season's greetings to all MRRC'ers. Well, we are now about halfway thought the contest season with the CQWW and ARRL early contests past us. I trust that all of your antenna projects performed up to par this year after all of the time that you spent on them. Here at WD8LLD we erected a pair of phased inverted L's for 80 meters. Although the jury is still out on their performance as a transmitting antenna, they really performed well as an 80 meter receiving antenna in CQWW CW. Hmmm, maybe we have hit on something here. As soon as we've done a bit more tweaking on them and are satisfied on their performance, I will write an article for the FLASH to let you in on the secret!

From what I have heard, it appears that we have done pretty well as a club in SS. Hopefully we won the gavel, although that remains to be seen until the results come out. I want to thank all of you that got on for SS this year and made a bunch of gso's for the club. I think that our club was well represented in both modes of the contest. Heck, even I got on in Phone SS and made a couple hundred contacts, and all of you know how I feel about SSB! I also want to express my sincere appreciation to the regional coordinators who gave their time to contact members and urge them to get on the air. Those people were Dave, K8CC; Jeff, KU8E; Dick, NZ8O; Doug, WD8AUB; and Ken, WD9INF. Without you help, guys, we would not have been able to pull it all off. Thanks for all your great work.

The Mad RIver membership was also active from various DX locations in CQWW CW. **Doug, WD8AUB** and **Bob KW8N** were two of the operators in the VP5FOC operation which made 9700 contacts from the Turks and Caicos. **Don, K8MFO** made the trip to Anguilla to operate as VP2EFO snagging over 5100 qsos in a SOAB effort. Congratulations on these fine scores. This will really pump up our club score for CQWW. It seems that I heard a rumor at the Michigan meeting that there might be some planning for a MRRC DXpedition for a future CQWW contest. Stay tuned, and start saving you sheckles, it might just happen!

Don't forget!!!! Get your scores to **Jim, K8MR** so they get in the FLASH. In addition, don't forget to mail in your logs. By forgetting to mail you logs, you don't get to see the fruits of your labors in the results and your score doesn't count for the club. Besides, with computer logging it only takes a couple of minutes.

While in Michigan for the USCEA swap meet and MRRC meeting, Don and I had the privilege of touring the K8CC contest station. Needless to say, we were very impressed! Dave has really put together a very fine contest station. If you make the trip to the Detroit/Ypsilanti area, you really have to stop in and see this work of art!

Well that about does it for this for this time. Don't forget the K8MR Christmas Party and MRRC meeting which on January 6, 1997. Hope to see you all there!

73, de Goose, WD8LLD gooster@delphi.com

From The Editor

By Dave Pruett, K8CC

It seems to me like it has been a pretty good contest season thus far. MRRC activity in CQWW SSB was pretty light, and the ARRL 10M contest was desparately short on propagation, but both modes of SS, not to



mention CQWW CW and ARRL 160M saw lots of MRRC calls bombarding the airwaves. Despite the sunspot minimum, contesters will seem to rack up the QSOs.

This edition of the FLASH will be arriving just prior to the K8MR Christmas Party/MRRC meeting on January 6. That weekend will see K8CC doing his usual thing leading the Michigan contingent on the annual DXpedition to the shores of Lake Erie. If you've never made the jaunt to the K8MR party, I highly recommend it to recharge your radio mojo after the holiday break.

Speaking of Michigan, there is an unconfirmed rumor circulating in the club that MRRC's most radio-active dentist may be QSYing from Columbus to Michigan, allegedly to allow more time in pursuit of the sport of snow-mobiling. Speaking as a propagation-challenged Michigan W8, I think I'd stay in Columbus and vacation in up north. Hopefully, more details will be available at the Christmas Party, with film at eleven!

People have been asking me recently to ask how we did in our Sweepstakes push. I guess they think I'm the right guy to ask, but I want to make it clear that I am not the club score-keeper. People sometimes send me scores via packet, and while I am truly interested to see what you've accomplished, please do not count on me to ensure that it makes the list. Jim, K8MR is the club score-keeper, so he is the guy who needs your scores.

I did not get a score report from Jim this month, which is why there is none in this newsletter (which should be our biggest month for scores, what with six major contests in the past seven weeks). In Jim's defense, I think we as a club have become haphazard in our score reporting. If this comment doesn't apply to you, ignore it, but the truth is Jim cannot report scores that have not been reported to him.

After a major contest, one of the main purposes of the MRRC Monday Night Net is to report scores and share experiences from the weekend. Jim seems to make a major effort to make the next after major contest to collect scores - why not take the time to check in and bask in your success? If you are in Michigan or northwest Ohio, it's best not to depend on the PacketCluster system to get the message to Jim. At press time, the Toledo-Cleveland link is still undergoing growing pains which means that the path to Jim is often not there.

We still need stuff for the *FLASH*. Does anyone every wonder why the newsletter arrives usually just barely on time? It's because there is often very little stuff submitted, and I have to "ghost-write" a lot of it myself. Please, make my job easier and *submit an article or idea* - I promise your newsletter will arrive sooner.

Hope to see everyone at K8MR's Christmas Party.

73, Dave, K8CC

How Old Are Those SS Ops?

By Gary Mitikin, AF8A and Dave Pruett, K8CC

There has been talk recently of an upswing in Sweepstakes activity. Many are hoping that this means there are greater numbers of younger (as in recently licensed) ops playing the 'Stakes. In this year's events, there did seem to be more checks of 94 and 95 (newbies) than recalled from previous years. Was the tide of gray reversing at last? With several years of *NA* files on hand, we decided to confirm or deny our suspicions.

Gary had three years or W8EDU CW results using NA, so sucked the .PRN files into a spreadsheet to run an analysis. Dave had six years of SSB results from WD8IJP's guest op efforts, so being the father of NA, he wrote a quickie program to extract the check from each QSO and count the total by years licensed. The "years licensed" were broken down into nine categories, beginning with checks of less than five years, up to those 71 years and greater. The results are as follows:

Years Licensed	Percent on CW	Percent on SSB
>= 71 years	0%	0%
61-70 years	2%	1%
51-60 years	4%	2%
41-50 years	12%	8%
31-40 years	35%	24%
21-30 years	23%	19%
11-20 years	14%	20%
6-10 years	4%	11%
<= 5 years	6%	14%

What do the numbers tell us? First of all, there are a lot of contesters that were licensed in the 60s and early 70s! On both modes, the ops licensed 31 to 40 years formed the largest group. What was it from those two decades that makes a ham of that vintage want to *contest?* Gary is too young to know (licensed in 1977) while Dave is a "baby boomer" (licensed in 1969). In his opinion, there was an air of adventure about the Sweepstakes back in the late 60s and early 70s that caused many an op to make SS a habit. These same ops are now mature adults who can afford a station and continue to run every year. Perhaps people don't see it that way any more...

Second, there seems to be a big difference in the demographics of CW vs. SSB. CW operators tend to be licensed longer (greater than 20 years), while there were twice as many ops (percentage-wise) licensed less than 20 years on phone than CW.

Third, Gary found that the percentages were pretty consistant from year to year. On phone, Dave found that the percentage of SS ops licensed five years or less was steadily increasing. Particularly interesting to note is that 1992 was roughly double of 1991, and doubled again in 1993. If my memory serves correctly, this was the beginning of the expanded SS awards program (cups, pins, etc.). This is powerful evidence that these kinds of incentives are successful at generating activity (at least on phone).

Regardless of what the numbers say, it is obvious that there is PLENTY of room for new blood in our part of the hobby. Maybe we all need to think about recruiting a few new contesters from time to time. Assuming our data from the Sweepstakes is relevant for all contests, we could sure use them.

Word is just in from MRRC's trusty badge custodian Buck, N8CQA that a new order of badge blanks has arrived. If anyone wants a spiffy MRRC badge like the ones you see people sporting at club meetings and get-togethers, these are available for just \$10. To to order, send a check for \$10 to club treasurer KE8OC (remember to the make the check to Tim O'Sullivan, not MRRC) along with the the name (first only) and call that you wish on the badge. Your badge will be mailed to you.

DON'T FORGET!

We need YOUR contributions for the next MRRC Flash - start working NOW on an article!

Deadline for publication: **FEBRUARY 1, 1995**

MRRC at the World Radiosport Team Championship

In the last *FLASH*, we reported that a group of W6s led by W6QHS and others had announced plans to put on an encore to the highly successful World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC) held in 1990. The event will be held in mid-July 1996, running simultaneously with the IARU HF Championship contest. There will be a maximum of 52 entries from around the world, each a two-man team.

MRRC and nine other major contest/DX clubs around the country were invited to nominate a captain for one of the ten American teams that would participate. The captain would then name a partner to operate on the team - but this partner had to come from outside the club that nominated the captain.

SELECTING A CAPTAIN - de WD8LLD

The call for nominations went out in the *FLASH* as well as on packet and on the Monday night MRRCnet. Although there was much interest, the fact that the participants would be responsible for travel expenses plus the reality of family and vacation pressures due to the July timeframe probably prevented some people from accepting nomination. In the end, four names were submitted for consideration:

Jeff Clarke, KU8E Bob Hayes, KW8N Doug Klein, WD8AUB Dave Pruett, K8CC

Allthough the voting turnout was a bit light, it was a close race. By a margin of only one vote, **Dave Pruett, K8CC** was nominated to carry the MRRC colors to San Francisco.

FORMING THE TEAM - de K8CC

I want to thank MRRC for allowing me this opportunity to represent our club in the World Radiosport Team Championship. All of the four nominees are outstanding operators, and I feel very priviledged to be the one chosen. We'll try our best to make MRRC proud!

After being selected, my next task was to select a team partner. It would have been my preference to pick one of the other MRRC nominees, or another club member, however the WRTC organizers were very explicit that the partner had to come from outside the club that nominated the captain. My first thought was to get with the North Coast Contesters and work out a mutual deal: the MRRC-nominated captain would pick a NCC partner, and the NCC-nominated captain would pick a MRRC partner. However, I spoke to the NCC captain (K3LR) who indicated that he had already picked a partner and that they were not interested.

After some dicussions with the "Big Fish", I have selected **Stan Stockton**, **K5GO** of Harrison, AR as my team partner. I have known Stan for almost twenty years, dating back to my college days in W5. He has been active contester/DXer throughout that time, running up a long string of Sweepstakes top-ten finishes in the high-power CW category. He has also been at the far end of the pileup, signing P40GO/P40M, V56WO and 450AA in the DX contests, as well as handing out DX Q5Os from places such as V5, 9M, and 8Q7SS. Also, for some time Stan has had an "unofficial" tie to MRRC, having logged time in several of the K8CC operating chairs during some of our multi-op efforts, as well as attending our Dayton Hospitality Suite most years.

Now that the team is selected, we're waiting for further information from the WRTC committee. In the meantime, Stan and I are talking about maybe going on a contest-pedition or two to hone our skills, much like Olympic athletes prepare. In any case, I expect to see a bunch of contest participation from K8CC and K5GO through the rest of the contest season to crack any remaining rust off our keys and mics. (It was only after he accepted that Stan realized he would have to operate SSB in the WRTC!) I wonder which logging program they will let us use?

The clock is on seven months and counting...

The Effects of Insulation at RF As told to K8CC by Jeff Benson, N8CC

I have often wondered what effects wire insulation has on the electrical length of an antenna. While discussing this one day, **Jeff Benson**, **N8CC** told me the story of how he and some of his ham buddies set out to get to the bottom of this mystery. They built a dipole for the fifteen meter band made of #14 THHN insulated house wire. The antenna was fed with coax and hung approximately ten feet in the air and had a minimum SWR at 21.1 MHz. Then, they took the antenna down, and with a sharp knife removed all of the insulation. When the antenna was re-installed in the same spot, the frequency of minimum SWR was 21.5 MHz - the frequency of minimum SWR had moved **HIGHER** in frequency by **2%** simply by removing the the insulation.

These results might explain some of the discrepancies I have seen at K8CC when translating wire antenna designs from the computer to the antenna field. Several carefully modeled wire antennas for eighty meters constructed with insulated wire have required length adjustments to get to the desired resonant frequency. I had always attributed these discrepancies to errors in the modeling program - it had never occured to me that the insulation was the culprit.

You say 2% is not a very big effect? Consider this - 2% is enough in many cases to make a resonant element into a reflector! At the very least, it can distort the results of antenna analysis. This was the case for N8CC - Jeff has had a big 4L 20M quad up for a number of years which was built using element lengths derived from the classic quad articles done by W0AW and others. The quad performed very well, but when it suffered wx damage, Jeff decided to see if it could not be improved through computer modeling. The modeling results were shocking - the antenna peaked up at the top of the band which did not jive with experience using the antenna (Jeff operates virtually 100% CW). The insulated #12 wire used on the quad had moved the resonant frequency down (2% is approximately 300 KHz on 20M).

When Jeff went to rebuild the quad for 20M and 15M, he first modeled it on the computer, then added 2% to the element lengths when he strung the the wire. He recently got the antenna back up in the air and reports that the 20M quad is right on frequency, while the 15M job is actually about 35 KHz low. Performance is judged to be as expected, which reinforces the observations concerning insulated wire.

Perhaps this information will be useful to someone in their antenna engineering efforts.

CW Keying Circuits By Dave Pruett, K8CC

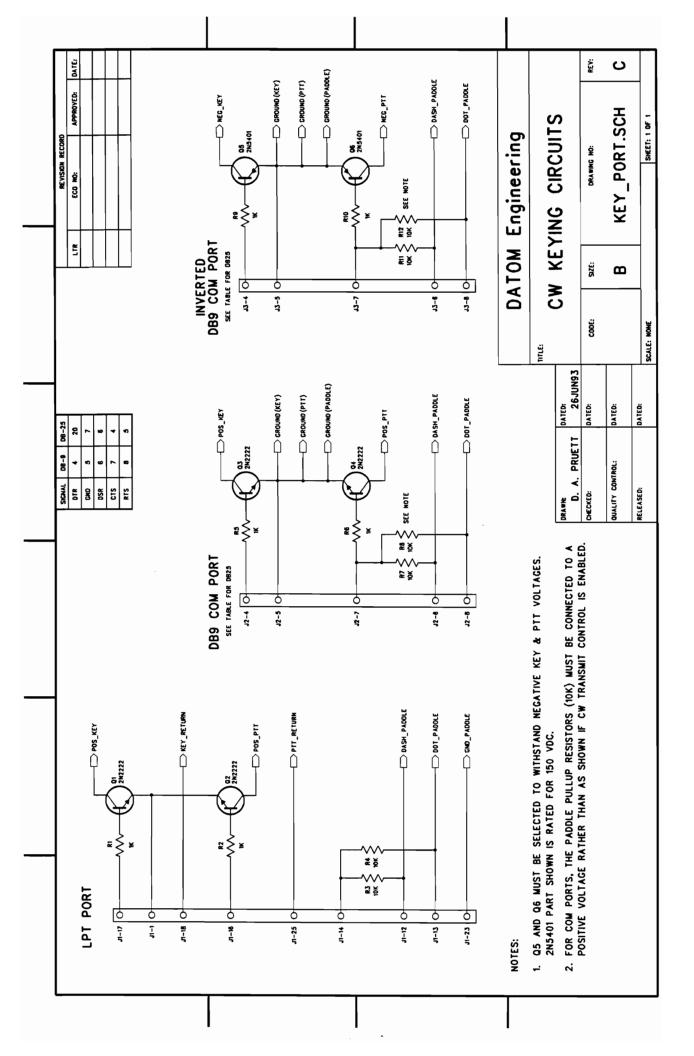
On the next page is a drawing showing several different types of circuits for CW keying your radio from one of the popular contest logging programs - NA, CT, TR-Log, or perhaps others. I originally made up the drawing for the next NA manual, but thought others might find it useful to have all of this information in one place. Some comments on each:

LPT PORT KEYING - All three programs support the keying portion of this interface. Both NA and TR-Log support the PTT output and paddle inputs.

COM PORT KEYING- All three programs support the keying portion of this interface. *NA* supports the paddle inputs, while *TR-Log* supports the PTT output which *NA* will add in version 9.27 available next month.

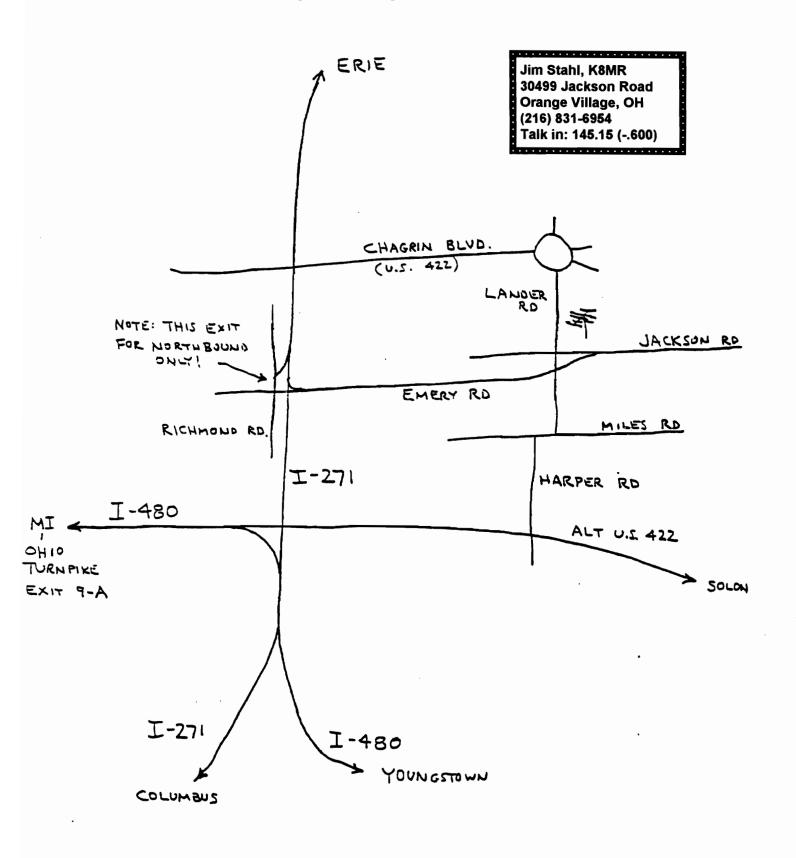
INVERTED COM PORT KEYING - This unusual configuration is used for negative-keyed (i.e., C-Line, TS830) radios, but does not require an outboard power supply like other published circuits. First seen in the *TR-Log* program, it is not supported by *CT* while *NA* will add it in version 9.27. Both *NA* and *TR-Log* support the PTT output, while *NA* also supports the paddle inputs.

Use of either of the COM interfaces should not interfere with using the same port for a serial data connection to a computerized radio.



The 19th Annual K8MR Christmas Party and MRRC Meeting

Saturday, January 6, 1996 at 7:30 PM



Treasurer's Report

By Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC

This is the time of year where we see if our budgeting is correct. Most people have already paid their dues for the year, and the \$\$\$ for our support of the ARRL contest



plaque program comes due. We also spent some money to replentish the "badge blank bank" (try saying that a few times real fast). On the other hand, there's likely to be no big expenses left before Dayton other than printing the *FLASH*, and even have our Dayton suite registration is already paid. We should be in good shape for the rest of the MRRC year.

Balance reported 10/95	\$519.68
Income Dues received Income from badge order	\$24.00 \$24.50
Expenses Checking Account Maint. (Oct-Dec) New Badge Blanks FLASH printing (Oct/Nov, Dec/Jan) ARRL SS Contest Plaque Sponsorship	\$9.00 \$85.86 \$158.00 \$100.00
<u>Balance 12/95</u>	\$215.32

Respectfully Submitted, Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC

Member Profile: Nick Grgic, VA3NA

One day, the telphone rings. A cheerful voice at the other end says "Hi, I'm Nick, VA3NA, I used to be YT7WW, but now I live in Windsor, Ontario and I'm want to meet some contesters". I told him that he had certainly come to the right place, and invited him to the USECA MRRC meeting in October. He showed up, and such began my (and MRRC's) association with **Nick Grgic**, VA3NA.

Nick began his amateur radio experience in 1979 at club station YU7BPQ. In Yugoslavia, you must take a class in amateur radio and work at a club station in order to get your license, and in 1983 Nick received the callsign YU7MIF and later YT7WW in 1986. In 1993, he and his family moved to Toronto, Canada where he was licensed as VE3EXW, and did some operating from well-known station VE3EJ.

Nick is an electronics technician by vocation, and worked as a HF/VHF radio technician for the government back in his home country. Today he works as an industrial electronic technician for Monelco in Windsor.

Nick has a rather auspicious introduction at contesting at K8CC. In the 1995 CQWW CW, he was the main 20M operator at our multimulti, and proceeded to pound out the best CW hour ever recorded at K8CC - a 140 hr at 13Z to Europe on Saturday.

The other members of the Grgic family are Nick's wife Svetlana, and son Sasha, age 4. They are currently living in an apartment in Windsor since they moved here in July 1995, but Nick has had no success in getting permission to install an outside antenna to go with his IC-720. At K8CC's urging, he is trying to get QRV on packet to keep in touch with other MRRCers, and to be ready for the next contest. After the fine job he did for us in CQWW, if I have any say it will be behind the mic or key at K8CC.



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





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