



The

FLASH



The Official Newsletter of the Mad River Radio Club

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From the MRRC 'Big Fish'

By Jeff Clarke, KU8E
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Greetings from the Big Fish. As I write this the CQWW DX SSB contest has just concluded, signaling the beginning of the contest season. Here at KU8E, we did a casual effort, tuning the bands giving all the serious guys a point or two.

It looks like the sunspots are on the rebound. 15 meters was open to Europe and 10 was actually open somewhere besides LU! On the other hand, conditions on 160 and 80 meters were noticeably down. Hopefully, everyone had a chance to get on and make some points for the club. Three of the next four weekends are contest weekends, (SS CW, SS Phone, and CQWW CW) so make sure you put in some time the contribute to the club score.

Those of you that were at Findlay might remember there discussion about having a Sweepstakes clinic. Bill, N8ET volunteered to be the host but unfortunately there was a lack of interest, so it was decided to postpone this until a later date. If anyone is interested in organizing this for next year let me know.

The next club meeting is the annual **K8MR Christmas/New Years party**, which is held the second Saturday in January. For those of you that have never made it, it's well worth the trip. The gang usually gathers at the contest station of K8AZ for pizza then heads over to K8MR for the party.

W8FN Update : For those of you that didn't know, long time MRRC member, **Randy Farmer, W8FN**, has relocated to Fort Worth, Texas to work for Motorola. The last time I spoke with Randy he was in process of setting up the station and had a R7000 vertical up for this contest season. Good luck to Randy on his new endeavor.

Congratulations also go out to **Pat Collins, K8LR (ex-NZ4K)**, on his marriage to Tonya in August.

Until next time...73 and GO MAD River !!!

Jeff, KU8E

SS is Coming!

Yes, November is here and with it comes the granddaddy of all contests, the **ARRL November Sweepstakes**. What makes the SS unique is that its one of the few contests where you might work ALL of the possible multipliers. It is also a contest where although a national ranking is almost impossible for a W8, a modest station can make a lot of QSOs.

Sweepstakes is important for MRRC because of the Affiliated Club Competition. By putting "MAD RIVER RADIO CLUB" on their summary sheets, club members can contribute their scores towards an aggregate number credited to MRRC. The club with the biggest total wins a trophy, in the form of a gavel. MRRC has won the Medium Club Gavel twice.

To help you do better in SS, the club has put together the first edition of the **MRRC SS Handbook**. Several of our club's experienced SSers have contributed tips, strategies, and techniques to help you increase your score. The MRRC SS Handbook is included with this issue of the FLASH, with the not so subtle innuendo that we hope that you'll get on the air and make some points for the club.

Your activity in SS helps MRRC two ways. Obviously, it helps pump up the combined club score. But it also gives your fellow members who are participating seriously in the contest another station to work. Activity breeds activity, as it were.

GOOOOOOOOOOO MAD RIVER!

The *FLASH* is the official newsletter of the Mad River Radio Club, and is published six times per year in even-numbered months. Submissions of material for the *FLASH* are welcome, and may be sent to the editor at the address of the last page.

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 treasurer KE8OC. Please make checks out to Tim O'Sullivan.

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.

The Editor's Keyboard

By Dave Pruett, K8CC
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As I am typing this, CQWW SSB is in full swing. At the helm of the K8CC contest station is a group led by MRRRC member **Gerry, K8GT** who is one of our club's "little guns", running a barefoot transceiver from home. The other three ops on the team have contested before, but mostly Field Day with a little SS thrown in. The big monobanders, legal limit amps, and computer logging that experienced testers take for granted were new stuff to them, and they had a ball. It was interesting to watch them run the station as learned how to use the tools at their disposal. The first day, they struggled a little, and perhaps acted too much like DXers chasing the spots. However, on the second day they hit their stride, and started to run pretty effectively on 20M and 15M. Most importantly, they kept both the run and mult stations manned effectively all weekend. In the end, 1300 QSOs and 2M points doesn't matter much in the national scheme of things,, but four operators got a serious dose of contesting from a big station, and had a good time doing it.

Over the weekend, K8CC also played host to the first Japanese DXpedition to Ypsilanti, MI! I'm kidding of course, but the K8CC CQWW crew also included two part-time operators from the land of the rising sun. You may have met **Koba, JR1HHA/WN1W** at the MRRRC Dayton Hospitality Suite the past two years. He works for NEC Electronics in Japan along with MRRRC member **Brian, W8WD**. Koba flew over from Japan just for the contest along with **Jun, JJ1BMB**. Koba and Jun made the trip to sample DX contesting from the USA, and to hear what the JA gang sounds like from this end. They got to work a few of their brethren on 40M Saturday morning, and also 20M later that day. They have a club station at their facility where they work at NEC, and their goal is to build it up into a contest station.

I tell this story to illustrate that not all contest efforts have to be full bore, and that a lot of good times are missed when we decline to participate in such efforts. Not every station can compete nationally, or even regionally. This leads some hams to the following credo, at least subconsciously:

If I can't win, I won't operate
If I'm not winning, I won't continue
If I haven't won, I won't mail in my log

In our case, some new ops gained valuable experience, and two JA hams left invigorated to rebuild their club station. Even the station owner was affected. The K8CC station has remained essentially the same outside for the past seven years. In a way,

this is good (the 3L 40 is eight years old and has outlived three rotators) but we never really had all the tools needed to compete in multi-multi. This is going to change, facilitated by a couple of DXpeditions this winter for both modes of ARRL DX (C6 on CW, WP3 on SSB) that allows us to start tearing apart the station early. Stay tuned for further reports.

One area of contesting which has long intrigued me is VHF contesting. I've personally dabbled a little with VHF, but never really got K8CC together properly. As mentioned last issue, I drove down near Gettysburg, PA to do the September VHF QSO Party with the gang at **K3MQH**. Eleven towers and nine bands - what a blast! **K3MM** and I made 760 of the 1700+ QSOs on 2M. On one hand, the "East Coast Corridor" was much in evidence, but more importantly the lesson I learned from **K3MQH** is the value of multiband activity. We moved people like crazy - we had 40 QSOs with ND3F/R alone. This can be done out here in the Midwest too, although we can't quite generate the same numbers as out east, I am convinced that VHF operating out here can be fun too.

I would like to see MRRRC encourage VHF activity in our region. A number of MRRRC members have VHF weak signal capability. **Don, K8MFO** and **Jim, K8MR** have three and four bands, respectively, and a number of other people have one or two bands. But as of the Findlay MRRRC meeting, we have a true VHF "big gun" in our midst. **Tom Whitted, WA8WZG**, who has actually WON VHF contests from his QTH near Sandusky, has joined our club at Findlay and brings a tremendous wealth of VHF experience. His fine station is QRV on just about most every band we have above 50 Mhz., which helps level the playing field through band-multipliers. Perhaps we can coax him to provide a station description in a future *FLASH*.

Besides stimulating VHF interest in general, I want to encourage the MRRRC membership to get on for the January VHF Sweepstakes. This is the one VHF contest in which there is an ARRL Affiliated Club competition. We can do some serious damage if we can round up activity. Besides 'MFO and 'MR, I know that **AC8W**, **K4LT**, **W8AV** and **W8KX** have VHF gear, and several more people share a latent interest like mine. **K8CC** plans to be QRV - there is enough gear sitting around here that with a little work we could be ready for a limited-multi entry (50/144/222/432) in January.

One thing I learned out east is the importance of FM to bolster the band totals, on 2M particularly. In the next *FLASH* we will have plans for frequencies and times so that those of you not equipped for VHF CW/SSB can help out the MRRRC effort via FM. Hey, out east **W3LPL** shut down his PacketCluster just so he could use his 146/223/446 radios to work us!

The point of this is to go out and have fun. Like **K8MR** says, "JUST DO IT"!

CW Filters For Contesting

By Joe Feustle, N8JF
From the Internet

I posted a original message to the Contest Reflector asking for comments on the wisdom of installing 250 Hz filters or perhaps purchasing 400 Hz IRC filters for CW contesting, as opposed to continuing with the 500 Hz filters that I already have. Though this request dealt specifically with the Kenwood TS-850S, the responses received are applicable to any rig. The key word, obviously, is contesting, and the special requirements it creates.

The consensus is that (1) the most important filtering is what goes on in the gray matter between the earphones; (2) the two principal forms of contesting (run stations or search and pounce) demand that one look at the question of filtering signals in a different way; (3) a single 250 Hz filter is probably too narrow and two cascaded together are almost certainly so, and (4) there are several alternatives to that very tight 250 Hz filter that would be "nice to have" occasionally.

More than one respondent observed that the danger to narrowing the IF filters to anything beyond 500 Hz is one of becoming, as Tree, N6TR, put it "too sharp." Contrary to what may be conventional wisdom about filtering, you can be too narrow and consequently "will start missing people calling off frequency" (N6TR), will have to "be very careful to tune the RIT slowly and widely +/- 200 Hz after a CQ to pick up the off-frequency" (K6LL). K3RA ("loong time op at W3LPL") observed: "Independent of the mfg., I have found that 250 HZ filters are too narrow for contesting. I replaced the pair of 250 Hz filters with 500 Hz filters." Even when tuning for other stations, Rol says that "the 250 Hz jobs just cause you to tune by the stations too fast." Rol's final words fairly well sum up the consensus on 250 Hz filters for contesting: "Tune the DX with 500, then switch to 250 on the rare occasion the narrower bandwidth is needed. But the 250's are

a PAIN (his emphasis, not mine) in the you know what for contesting!"

Several respondents suggested that you really want to hear MORE not LESS during a contest. KR2Q put it this way: "250's are too narrow for CONTESTING unless you want to hold a run frequency near the bottom of the band on 80 meters. Sure, you hear other 'crap' with the 500's, but that 'crap' includes stations you WANT to work." Doug also points out that the things going on outside the "walls" of the filters can include other important information beside the stations who may be calling you: "I like to be able to hear more; if not other stations calling me, or for me to call, at least to be able to hear what else is 'happening' around the frequency. With narrow filters, you can think you have a great frequency to play on, but in reality, your signal may be covered up by someone else very close by."

K0RC, citing lessons learned from K0FVF (Jim Dokmo, SK), discouraged the use of 250 Hz filters and suggested instead opening up the pass band: "he (K0FVF) suggested that I open the filters up to 2.5 Khz and back off on the RF gain. Then listen for stations calling you. I was amazed at how far off frequency some of the station were that were calling Jim. With my filters 'cranked up', I never heard them!"

Lee, K0WA, and AL, GM4BAP, both consider the IRC 400 Hz filters quite adequate for contesting. Al used the recent IARU Region CW Field Day as a testing period and found "the IRC 400Hz units offer a 'perfect compromise' for contesting. They are narrow enough to give excellent rejection even on a crowed 7Mhz, yet aren't too narrow that they can't be used whilst tuning the band for S&P." However there appears to be an additional task (especially challenging for fumble-fingered people like me)

involved in installing these units: you have to cut and solder leads in the 850.

The most frequently suggested alternative was a DSP unit for those times when 500 Hz doesn't seem to be quite enough, though K0RC also passed on the suggestion--one that I've used before but that seems to escape me at key moments like contests--of backing off the RF gain control as another type of simple "filtration."

Finally, if you will allow the obvious, contesting requires lots of practice. So, how does an operator get/keep the gray matter going outside of the major contests? Bob's (K0RC) suggestion is practice with PED: "...I have been practicing with the PED CW contest simulator program. I set the filters to 6 Khz and sit back to listen. I am able to put the rate meter into the 300's quite often. But this required me to reverse my thinking on how to run stations during a CW contest. It has been hard for me to switch my style of operating, but with the lesson I learned first hand, I know the results I can achieve!" I, too, have had to "reverse my thinking." As can be seen from my original question, I considered narrower filters to keep signals OUT. The correct thinking is the opposite: use as wide a set of filters that you can process through your brain in order to let as many signals IN, and get a maximum amount of information about what is going on AROUND you. I have two 500 HZ filters and a Timewave 59+. What I need is not more filters, just lots more practice.

Tnx to: N6TR, K9MA, K0WA, Bill Robbins, KD6DAE, WS7I, K6LL, K8CV, K3RA, N1MM, W1IHN, KE6BER, N4ZR, KR2Q, KA9A, K0RC, and GM4BAP

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☆ **DON'T FORGET!** ☆
☆ We need YOUR contributions for the next ☆
☆ MRRC Flash - start working NOW on an ☆
☆ article! ☆
☆ Deadline for publication: ☆
☆ **December 1, 1997** ☆
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Treasurer's Report

By Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC
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Sorry to have missed the Findlay meeting, but it appears that K8CC was able to handle the treasurers chores in my place. We added another seven dues-payers this period, but its also the time of year where the roster is purged of deadbeats. If you know of any such folks, you might hit them with a not-too-subtle hint to get with the program.

<u>Corrected Balance</u>	\$507.42
<u>From 7/97</u>	
<u>Income</u>	
Dues received	\$84.00
<u>Expenses</u>	
Checking Acct Maintenance	\$ 8.00
FLASH Printing	\$ 87.00
<u>Balance 9/97</u>	\$496.42

Respectfully Submitted,
Tim O'Sullivan, KE8OC

The MRRC Internet Reflector

MRRC has finally entered cyberspace. Thanks to the generosity of Bill Fisher, W4AN, the club now has its own Internet e-mail reflector. For those of you not familiar with reflectors, these have become extremely popular over the past few years. Interested parties will "subscribe" or join the list to exchange e-mail. All e-mail sent to the reflector is "reflected" back to all of the subscribers, sort of like a big party line.

To register for the MRRC reflector, send an Internet e-mail message to **MRRC-REQUEST @ contesting.com**. The word *subscribe* (lower case) must appear in the body of the message. It may take a few hours or a day before the registration becomes effective.

To utilize the MRRC Reflector, simply address your e-mail to **MRRC @ contesting.com**. You should see your message reflect back in a short time. Let the discussions begin!

Again, the reflector is located on an Internet host machine at W4AN's company. This same machine hosts the DX and NA reflectors. Bill generously provides these services free for the benefit of the contesting community. Drop him an e-mail some time at **W4AN @ contesting.com** and let him know how much you appreciate these services.



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