



# The Flash

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## From The Big Fish

By Dave Pruett, K8CC  
k8cc@mediaone.net

Greetings, MRRCers! I hope everyone has been enjoying their summer. It seems like all I've done is check logs (ARRL 160 & ARRL 10, plus MQP). However, there also has been some unusual radio-related trips – one to South Bend, IN to pick up 5000' of fiberglass guy material, and another to Kingston, ON with K9TM to pick up a new tower to replace the one bent by the tornado at his QTH. I've certainly refreshed my "trailer towing" skills this summer.

These past few months have seen a lot of activity within MRRC. In June, a band of hardy MRRCers battled the elements to pound out over 3,000 QSO's from K8MAD as a Field Day 2A entry. July saw Tim, K9TM with partner N2IC represent MRRC at WRTC 2000 with a very respectable finish. IARU HF had K8JM, K9NW (@ K9UWA), K8CC (multi), W8AV (multi) plus other MRRCers pounding away to big scores. Later in the month the club was treated to the "Goosefest" at the QTH of W8AV. So far, August has seen MRRC NAQP teams on both CW and SSB, with the Ohio QSO Party (sponsored by MRRC) yet to come. It's been a busy summer.

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As many of you know, over the past eight months there have been discussions between MRRC and the North Coast Contesters (NCC) about a possible merger of the two organizations. I received an e-mail recently from Tom, K8AZ indicating that as the result of discussions at a recent club meeting, the NCC has decided to remain a separate entity.

For those of us who went through the NCC separation in 1989, its déjà vu all over again. Once again, those involved with NCC have decided that their "by invitation only" membership and minimum log submittal requirements are the most important aspects of a contest club and require them to go a path separate from MRRC. But in a number of ways its not the same as 1989: This time, MRRC is the stronger organization with a wide variety of contesting activity – MQP/OQP sponsorship, NAQP/Sprint teams and K8MAD Field Day – in addition to steady SS and DX contest participation and supported by a regular meeting schedule, active officers, a vital newsletter and web site. This time, NCC does not have the excitement of newness in its corner and some of the strong personalities which drove it in the beginning are absent. This time NCC is a mature organization that faces the challenges of energizing a graying membership to be something more than names on a roster.

So while the merger is off, this decision should not change the camaraderie that exists between the MRRC and NCC memberships. Invitations to the K8AZ/NCC and K8MR/MRRC Christmas parties will continue to be extended to members of both clubs. NCC has stated a desire to do things together more than simply once per year. Perhaps 2001 will see a joint Field Day effort (the North Mad River Coast RC?) I will contact K3LR and begin a discussion of how we want to approach Dayton together. NCC could also step up and support the state QSO parties we sponsor. Life goes on.

If this newsletter reaches you prior to OQP, please get on and make some QSOs. In the meantime, I'd like to hear your comments and ideas about the club, either via the MRRC reflector, or in private to the e-mail address listed above. I hope to see everyone at the Findlay meeting.

73, Dave/K8CC

## The Editor's Keyboard

by Jeff Clarke , KU8E

This is my first issue of the Flash as the new editor. Thanks to **K8CC** for putting together the last issue and giving me a chance to learn the software on my computer to produce newsletters. You might notice that the format is a little different. I thought it might be nice to change it since we have had the same format for many years. Please give me your feedback if you like it or if you don't. I'm a novice at doing this so don't be too tough on me !!

As always we are looking for articles to publish. You don't have to be a professional writer or an expert on some subject. Personally, I really like reading stories about people's operating experiences. We are starting to get into the beginning of another contest season, so there should be plenty of stories out there. We will take those technical stories too. I know we have lots of people in this club that have tons of tips they can share with the rest of us. So give it a try ! The deadlines for articles is on the **MRRC** resource page on the last page of the Flash .

In closing I would like to make some comments about the **NCC** situation. I am very disappointed , like many of you that the **NCC/MRRC** merger is not going to happen . I am a longtime **MRRC** member and remember the good old days when we were one club. I think we should put this behind us and move on. **MRRC** has many good things going for it as a club. Activity is increasing , we sponsor two successful state **QSO** parties and we have a good quality web site and newsletter to communicate news to our members. See everyone in Findlay in September...

Jeff KU8E

### Score Rumors

### NAQP SSB

Call	QSO	MULT	SCORE	TEAM
W8MJ	726	174	126324	MRRC #1
ND8DX	664	178	118192	MRRC #1
K5IID	500	141	70500	MRRC #1
N8KR	442	145	64090	
NU8Z	364	111	40404	
K9NW	353	112	39312	MRRC #1
KU8E	305	96	29820	MRRC #2
K8MR	83	49	4312	MRRC #2
AA8U	73	51	3723	

### NAQP CW

Call	QSO	MULT	SCORE	TEAM
W8MJ	683	181	123623	MRRC #1
N8EA	556	188	103776	MRRC #1
KU8E	494	152	75088	MRRC #1
K8MR	411	158	64938	MRRC #2
K5IID	436	147	64092	MRCC #1
NU8Z	338	107	36166	MRRC #2
KC8FXR	180	77	13860	MRRC #2
WX3M	168	67	11256	
K8DD	100	51	5100	
K8CC	89	53	4717	
K9NW	70	34	2380	

### IARU

Call	QSO	MULT	SCORE	CLASS
K8CC	1949	206	1492058	Multi-Op
(+K8GL,WD8S)				
W8AV (+K4LT)	1771	149	1060135	Multi-Op
K9NW @K9UWA	1759	201	1291827	CW Only
KU8E	928	137	412096	CW Only
K8JM	802	108	301536	CW Only
KT8X	372	46	69920	CW Only
K8GT	544	125	233000	Mixed
N8KR	454	115	158240	Mixed
K8MR/4 (SC)	278	61	55998	Mixed
KC8FXR	276	?	42600	Mixed

### Field Day

#### K8MAD 2A

( K8MR,K8CC,W8AV,W8AJ,KU8E,W0CG)

SCORE = 9894

Band	CW	SSB
80	316	346
40	744	610
20	386	218
15	88	40
10	34	15
6	12	228
2	11	33
SAT	12	1
TOTAL	1603	1491

W8TK (+ K4LT) 1b-2 OPS

Score = 6572

BAND	CW
80	273
40	720
20	413
15	62
10	0
TOTAL	1468

## MRRC Profiles - ND8DX

by Elmer Steingrass , W8AV

This issue of the *FLASH* profiles Karl Brandt, ND8DX. Karl resides in Poland, Ohio and is 38 years old (only one year younger than W8AV!) He has been licensed for twelve years and has held the calls of KC6FEF and N6WLX in addition to his present call.

Karl's radio interest began in his formative years when he and his mother would listen to short wave broadcasts on a small portable table radio. "I was always amazed by how we could listen to a radio station in Europe or wherever on this small radio. It was and still is kind of magical, although I now understand the mechanics of it all," Karl recalls. With the radio seed planted in his mind, Karl applied what he learned from his electronics classes in school, amateur radio study guides, and code tapes to earn his amateur radio license and did it all without having an "Elmer" to guide him along the way. He presently holds an Extra Class license.

It's a wonder that Karl can find any time for amateur radio with all the non-radio hobbies that he has. He holds a private pilot's license and has logged nearly 850 hours of flying time. He also enjoys hunting, tinkering with firearms as an amateur gunsmith, archery, woodworking, and stunt and sport kite flying. In addition to all this, Karl is also very involved in drag racing both in the building and driving aspects of the sport. He currently races a 1978 Pontiac Firebird and is in the process of reworking the engine to get his ride to be a solid 10-second bracket machine on the strip. Despite all these hobbies, Karl also enjoys the rewards that come from being a father to step daughter Lindsay and son Ryan.

Ham radio interests outside of contesting include traffic handling, public service, DXing, and constructing antennas and small station accessories. Karl notes that he builds most of his accessories junk that he has salvaged from scrap boards. His station consists of a Kenwood TS-940, fitted with International Radio filters, and a Kenwood TS-140.

The impressive ND8DX antenna farm sports a TH-7 at 60 feet, a homebrew four element ten meter yagi on a twenty foot boom at 36 feet fixed on South America, and a triband dipole at 50 feet. He also has a full size elevated 40 meter vertical a 40/80 inverted vee, a 50 foot top-loaded vertical for 80 and 160, and several receiving antennas for 80 and 160. Karl states that his only antenna that is not homebrew is the TH-7.

Karl credits Dennis, N6KI and Charlie, W6UQF-SK with introducing him to the sport of amateur radio contesting. His favorite mode is SSB only because as he puts it, "I'm not good enough at CW to have a really good time."

Karl's favorite contests are WPX, SS, and both modes of the CQ 160 Contests. He likes the fact that contesting challenges him to improve both his operating skills and his station hardware to achieve new personal goals each year. Karl became a MRRC member after receiving an invitation from Dave, K8CC, following the 1998 SS phone contest and looks at his membership in the club as a great way to be involved with other hams who enjoy contesting. He says that although the club already has a good reputation in contesting circles, he would like to see MRRC improve its standings in the medium club category each year and year.

Karl is employed by the R & S Saw and Knife Company where he regrinds and sharpens high speed circular saw blades that used in the production cutting of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, plastics, and vinyl.

### Contest Calendar

<i>August 26-27</i>	<i>Ohio QSO Party</i>
<i>September 9-10</i>	<i>WAE SSB</i>
<i>September 9-11</i>	<i>ARRL VHF QSO Party</i>
<i>September 10</i>	<i>NA Sprint - CW</i>
<i>September 17</i>	<i>NA Sprint - SSB</i>
<i>October 7</i>	<i>CA QSO Party</i>
<i>October 14-15</i>	<i>PA QSO Party</i>
<i>October 15</i>	<i>NA Sprint - RTTY</i>
<i>October 28-29</i>	<i>CQWW SSB DX</i>

## MQP or Bust !

by Don Chisholm , WX3M

Bruce Lallathin, AA8U, built the "Ugly Stick" secret weapon mobile antenna especially for the **Michigan QSO Party**. I felt honored to be asked to be the "operator" for the expedition to the Upper Peninsula. Bruce's well-equipped Toyota pick-up included a Yaesu FT-900 CAT, Heil headset, and a Bencher paddle. The laptop logging computer sat on a board on my lap, cushioned by a pillow for comfort, with the paddle strapped to it for stability. Conditions were tight, but not cramped (at least not at first). Our antenna was the "piece de resistance" of the station. Bruce homebrewed a center/top loaded vertical, with a massive multi-tap coil and a huge capacity hat. This achievement works well to 160m and below (AM broadcast mobile, anyone?). Our plan for the weekend was to depart Jackson around 4pm or 5pm. When I arrived at AA8U, Bruce was packed and ready. We added a tri-magnet mount to the roof of the truck with a 15m and 20m Hamstick, to allow faster band switching, and were ready to depart. However, we also noticed some horrendous vehicular interference in the radio that did not exist the previous weekend at the trial test at K8CC. We eliminated the variable of the additional antenna as a possible picker-upper of noise, but this did not help. Concerned about time, we departed, hoping to be able to troubleshoot later.

Traffic was light, and we made excellent time. We met the K8CC team of K8CC and W8MJ for dinner, in Clare, and headed for St. Ignace. Because we arrived well after dark, we didn't get much opportunity to try to locate our problem. Bedtime came quickly.

Saturday morning meant final preparations of the stations, pictures with Lake Huron in the background, and off to breakfast. Pressed for time, we still were not able to locate the phantom noise problem. Murphy seemed to strike again. Apparently some of the coil turns were shorting together in places where the enamel was scraped off to allow for the soldering of taps. The wind movement during the long drive seemed to "loosen" up a few things. The rig was complaining of bad SWR, even though the tap combinations and feed point matching network were pre-tested and checked out OK. A few "emergency" roadside stops on the journey to our starting point revealed the problem and we realized we were going to have to make the best of it.

The start of the contest seemed a little rocky. Our best bands for the start were expected to be 20 and 40, but the noise was stronger than most of the signals for that time of day. For the first several hours, we changed bands and modes often, and were only able to work the strongest stations from each of our counties. When it

was apparent that there was plenty of activity on the band we could not hear, Bruce pulled off to a *stunning* scenic overlook of Lake Superior and turned off the engine. WOW, the signals that came out of the noise astounded me. I worked as many as I could and as quickly as I could while Bruce caught some photos in the suddenly colder temperatures. The wind off of the water could penetrate the healthiest constitution!

Back on the road was business as usual. A few stops here and there to kill the engine and work the bands helped the score, but our time schedule lagged somewhat. Near Munising, along the Lake Superior shore, the weather turned sour as well. Rain, then sleet, then ice was on the menu. A brief stop at McDonalds to refuel the driver and operator (and truck) was a well-needed short break.

As we began north on the Keewenau Peninsula, toward Houghton, Hancock, and Keewenau County, our northern-most goal, Mother Nature gave us sunshine and cool temperatures. However, we found inland lakes, which were *still frozen over*, an eye-opening indication as to the extremities of weather experienced by inhabitants native to these parts. Because this was the middle of April, we "trolls" did not expect to see this.

Once in Keewenau County, we stopped and parked for 45 minutes to operate. Another lingering problem now reared its ugly head. Bruce had 4 computer batteries, with calculated life of 3+ hours each. This would give up plenty of power for the 12 hours of operating. However, they were not lasting as long as they were supposed to – about 1.5 to 2 hours max. While stopped, the last of the batteries died. As I was hollering disparaging remarks in Bruce's general direction, suggesting that *he* had better figure out how to paper-log and drive at the same time, he revealed a backup plan. A 12VDC-120VAC inverter (Hewlett Packard lab quality) was engaged under the driver seat and the computer was up and running again. This was indeed a last resort because, when testing it, Bruce observed that the inverter created RF interference, and was most noticeable on 40m and 80m. However, with the new "phantom menace" produced by the truck, no inverter interference was noticeable. (I am still curious to see how Bruce planned to paper-log while driving . . .

The trip back brought darkness, and more of a mess. Apparently an ice storm was slowly making its way across the lower half of the Upper Peninsula, the same path that would allow us to activate the necessary counties. By this time, 40m and 80m signals were pretty strong and were getting through

## **MQP: U.P. or Bust!** (continued from page 4)

the receiver noise fairly well. However, the weather was making racket on the windows, and was slowing travel considerably. As the contest ended, we still had two more counties to go! Therefore, we had 4 hours yet to go before we could make it back to the motel, in St. Ignace, where our rooms were already reserved for that night. Driving became more of an adventure. It involved careful road observations, a few precarious slips and slides in the sleet, and much willpower for the driver and now co-pilot and map-reader to stay awake and on course. When we eventually arrived back in St. Ignace, we were dog-tired, and every surface of the truck and antenna were completely encased in ice – we looked as though we just came out of some polar-expedition documentary on the Discovery channel.

The drive home on Sunday was leisurely and relaxing, and it was apparent how much either of us wanted to still be in that truck. We commented frequently about other vehicles on the road that would make fine MQP mobiles. (Toyota Land Cruiser, GMC Suburban, gigantic motor home, etc.)

One noticeable drawback discovered about operating this contest from as far north as we were was that half of our "circle" of propagation now fell in Lake Superior. We were not able to work the many mobiles in the Lower Peninsula as reliable as they could work each other. They had to be as loud as the fixed stations to compete with the noise. As far as a contesting operating event, I believe we were not as successful as we had hoped. Our plan hinged on being a very desirable multiplier for all other stations in the contest as we traveled from rare county to rare county. Due to Murphy (noise and antenna problems), we were not able to hear many of the stations calling us. However, we were very successful at learning exactly what is necessary for contesting mobile from the Upper Peninsula and I think we would embrace the opportunity to do it again with this experience now under our belts.

## **K8GL Contest Tips - Staying Awake**

**by Greg Surma , K8GL**

While dutifully riding the exercise bike the other night, I ran into an article by N6TV in a 1992 *NCJ* concerning how to stay awake in contests. Two tips were given. The first was to read old copies of the *NCJ*, and the second was to sing "The Star Spangled Banner" out loud. Though the latter suggestion was a bit tongue-in-cheek, both activities are meant to stimulate both mental and physical activities in order to refresh the mind and increase the flow of blood.

Anyone who has seriously contested knows that staying awake and staying interested is a battle, especially at 4 AM local time on Sunday morning when the last European has faded out on the low bands.

I have often felt that the adaptation of computer logging has been mostly good yet at times somewhat bad. It saves energy in not having to both log and dupe sheet each contact. However, it dulls the senses through repetitive activity (F1-LOG-F4-F1-LOG etc) and is a poor source of real time continuous information during the contest. True, one can query "ALT-M" for a rundown of European countries worked, but who has time to sort through the asterisks and get a real feel for missing mults? And how long would you retain that info in the midst of battle? You also can do a "Check-Country" on the keyboard by entering "GW" but, again, this information is for a single country and is a fleeting display.

One of my solutions for keeping sharp and providing needed multiplier information is to keep a manual check sheet on all 6 bands of European counties worked. In the CQWW I keep an additional list of zones worked on each band. This not only gives me real time feedback of multiplier deficiencies, it also stimulates the mind beyond mere keyboard entry. Because of space constraints and not wanting to fight with small print, I keep one three-band sheet for the upper bands and one three-band sheet for the lower bands.

I'll gladly forward a WORD.doc or FAX/mail a copy of this to anyone interested.