

# THE BLACK HOLE



ARRL SS Unlimited Team Champs 2000, 2001, 2002

Official Journal of The Society of Midwest Contesters

Volume XVI Issue 2

Sep 2003

## A WRTC Travel Story

by Pat Barkey, N9RV

Why do we contest? That has always been a difficult question to answer. But when you boil it all down, a big part of the answer is recognition. We strive to be known among our peers at being good at what we do.

Maybe that's why I threw my hat in the ring and tried to get on a WRTC team for 2002. We all know how hard it can be to get recognized for anything you do in a contest from W9-land. The thought of competing on a level playing field with all those guys from the east coast doesn't come along very often, right? But for a guy whose foreign travel experience to date consists of day trips to Canada and Mexico, the news that I made the wild card selection to represent the U.S. in Finland (as one half of 13 2-man teams) was thrilling and scary at the same time.

Since part of my trip expenses were helped out by SMC, I'd like to pay you back by sharing the tale of my trip and letting you know

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## Upcoming Contests

Sep 13-15 ARRL Sep VHF QSO Party

Sep 14 NA Sprint SSB

Sep 20-21 ARRL 10GHz Contest

Sep 27-28 CQ/RJ WW DX Contest, RTTY

Sept 27-28 Scandinavian Activity, SSB

Sep 27-28 Texas QSO Party

Oct 4-5 Oceania DX Contest, SSB

Oct 4-5 QCWA QSO Party

Oct 11-12 Oceania DX Contest, CW

Oct 25-26 CQWW SSB

## K9PG Honored!

by Clay Melhorn N9IO

Society of Midwest Contesters president, Paul Gentry, K9PG was honored with a plaque, presented by National Contest Journal editor, Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA.



K9PG has led the SMC to 3 consecutive wins (3-Peat), of the ARRL November Sweepstakes. And countless other contests throughout the seasons. Congratulations to both Paul, and the SMC!

## The Black Hole



The **Black Hole** is published six times per year by The Society of Midwest Contesters. Permission for use of the materials is hereby granted on the sole condition that credit is given to the source of those materials.

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Dave Barkey, N9RV

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Membership in **The Society of Midwest Contesters** is open to all persons with a bona-fied interest in amateur radio contesting. Dues are \$10.00 US per calendar year. For more information contact one of the following officers:

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## SMC Stuff

Club badges can be obtained by sending a check for \$5.50 to:

**Midwest Engraving**  
6920 W. North Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53213

**Phone (414) 258-8655**  
**FAX (414) 258-8656**

Be sure to note that it is for a "Black Hole" badge and please allow a couple weeks for delivery.



# KC9FD

**SOCIETY OF MIDWEST**

### SMC Clip-on Badge

by NV5A

The SMC logo appears at the top-center of the badge in black and white. Your call sign, first name and city & state appear in dark blue. The SMC name badge as shown with the slot & strap with swivel alligator clip, but there are other choices.

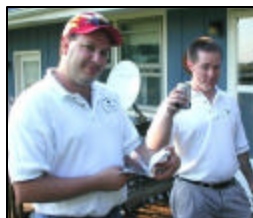
Price: \$14.50 (includes s&h).

Order now from **The SignMan**



### SMC Shirts

SMC short-sleeve Polo shirts are available in two styles: white shirt with "SMC" in black and "name and call" in blue lettering as shown below, or red shirt with black lettering. The cost is \$20, including shipping. You can email your orders to [AD9P@aol.com](mailto:AD9P@aol.com) (AI) or [N0UXQ@aol.com](mailto:N0UXQ@aol.com) (Sandy)



# W9SMC

Official Callsign  
of  
The Society of Midwest Contesters

SMC Web Page: [www.w9smc.com](http://www.w9smc.com)

## Got Sprint?

by Mr. t0ad (also known as KA0GGI)

This is totally gangster, totally take-no-prisoners, totally operator skill and a sense of timing you have never experienced. It is truly an ABSOLUTE exercise for the operator who wants to be a winner, and a definite "don't miss" four hours for the operator who likes to be answered, and has the desire to sharpen his contest operating skills.

I got in my first sprint in eighty-something, one of those turn on the radio and see what's on the band evenings, and here was this contest. *Kewl*, I'll hand out a few Q's. That first pileup whipped me so hard I was logged in and out of that contest in about 15 seconds. My radio flat scared the hell outta me that night !

Last year I got into my second ever sprint ( okay, but it IS the new millennium and contesting NOW is not just your rack-mounted 4-400 and Variac driving the old lady crazy. More of you than I could begin to guess have as much or more genetic history of RF in your chromosomic kinkiness as I do, so you know.

This is the night the stars come out to play. This is the night you will share something special with almost all of those call signs that you look at in whatever manner or list they are now disseminated.

Siskel and Ebert rate this one 4 woodies. Normally those guys are fairly stingy with their objective musings, but 4 woodies for a 4-hour event is a fair granting. They rate it that way ONLY because they got into their SECOND sprint. It goes without saying their first ratings were limp, given that their radios scared the hell out of them that first time, too. Hey, we're all newbies 'til we decide to do something about it.

I waste your time with this nonsense, but to finish quickly, I think I scored 240 something Q's in 4 hours using the 3 bands allowed in this one. Come to find out that's not bad, but I'm the one who has chosen to listen to all the liars on 3830 and learn that I have the LOWEST score of anybody who calls in to reminisce, post scores and collectively laugh.

My radio-brothers, it's true, when you're done with this one, you have CONTESTED and know you have gotten into the ONE EVENT that will never, ever, be put in a mundane category by anyone.

Who ever created the Sprint was obviously on some GOOD drugs!

This is just an opinion, and I may be wrong.

## The VHF Column

by Kevin Kaufhold (W9GKA)

Hopefully, this will be the start of a regular column on VHF activities in a regularly issued SMC Black Hole. At least, that is what I strive for in this column – to coordinate VHF contest and operating activities for the club on an on-going basis.

### Announcing the SMC VHF Web Page

Brian, K9QQ, has done a great job setting up a new VHF contesting page on the SMC web site. This is in addition to the VHF Contesting Records and High scores pages that he previously put onto the web site.

The new VHF page is designed to be a 'first stop' for information pertaining to VHF Operating and Contesting. It can grow and evolve pretty much as we see fit. I envision the following:

I have already placed a SMC VHF Operator Survey on the VHF page. This is similar to the VHF ops lists that I sent out to the SMC reflector for the 2003 June VHF contest, except with a nicer format. Could you please send any corrections or updates directly to me, at w9gka@arrl.net. I am looking for more detailed info, such as grid squares, bands of operation, current contesting activities, and VHF accomplishments, (such as high scores / certificates received or VUCC obtained - and on what bands).

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## SMC Needs Your Support

As one of the top contest clubs in the nation, we continue to sponsor 500 plaques for a number of the major contests and make monetary donations in the interest of promoting radio sporting.

A few years ago, we decided to eliminate formal dues, and instead, maintain funds through member donations.

Please consider making a donation to the club. You can send a check, money order or cash to:

JON OGDEN NA9D  
905 SURREY LN  
ALGONQUIN IL 60102-2058

Or use Paypal.... [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) and email your donation to [dues@w9smc.com](mailto:dues@w9smc.com).

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I also have now assembled an SMC VHF Club competition sub-page, accessible from the VHF page. This page is designed to emphasize SMC activities on the VHF contests with club competition. I am especially in need of corrections for the winner of the intra-club certificate. For those people that have previously run with the SMC in the VHF competitions, could you please let me know who had the high intra-club score for each contest.

I also have on the web site the latest version of my VHF Historical Notes. I am quite proud of the Notes, as they are possibly the most complete rendition of 80 years of VHF contesting activities and VHF rules changes contained in any one single source anywhere. I am always looking for more info for the Notes, so please let me know of any historical items of VHF contesting that might be of interest to you.

Also, please review the contest records and high scores for the 5 listed VHF contests. Please keep sending in any revisions or corrections to the line scores.

If there are any VHF links that you want on the VHF page, please let me know what those are, and we can see about expanding the links section of the VHF page. I am thinking of a grouping of links, like one set of links for VHF clubs, another set for JT44, a third for MS, etc. Please send to me your favorite VHF links.

If you have any historical or current pictures of your contest activities, please attach them to me, as I want to build a photo album of SMC member activity on VHF. I may want to couple the pictures with past and current accomplishments of the SMC members. For example, I am quite happy that 3 SMC members set division records in the 2003 January VHF SS, and I crave for pictures celebrating these types of things.

In addition, if you have published any operating or technical articles / papers of a VHF amateur nature, we can always scan them into a PDF file for downloading from the VHF page. I have two such articles myself, and have obtained a third from another SMC member, so we can start with those, but give me anything you may have done over the years. I want something on MS, JT44, or EME operator procedures, for instance. Simple technical matters – such as how 2 and 4 bay VHF antennas are properly and cheaply phased together using only coax lines - would be of great interest, as well. Another great article would be on the use of cheap CATV lines for VHF freqs, and the associated mismatch and connector problems on those freqs (especially by 222 and 432). A ditty on the cheap and effective switching of VHF transverters using a single IF source would be super, too (Bob, K2DRH, has already worked out

a great little way to switch microwave transverters in and out of a FT-726 acting as the IF!). But anything someone may have already written would be fine. A technical article sub-page would serve as a great reference point for old and new VHF'ers, alike.

A VHF contest calendar (including months of the various meteor storms) could be easily developed on the main VHF Page, itself.

We could also develop a listing of SMC area VHF beacons and SMC area VHF nets. Could you please send to me any knowledge of such beacons and nets, and I can begin to develop a list that would link into the VHF Page.

Anything else that you want included on the VHF page, please let me know.

### **Current and Future Contest / Operating Events**

Over 30 SMC members ran in the 2003 June VHF QSO Party. The League electronically received 26 SMC logs by the 30-day mark, and there may be some stragglers that I do not know about. SMC members in the contest generated over 1.86 Million points. This bodes very well next year for the 2004 June QSO Party, when the club competition begins in the event.

Numerous operators have reported to me and the club reflector tremendous 6meter conditions both during and after the June Contest. Considering where we are at in the solar cycle, I am not sure anyone was anticipating such a contest run. There was also some good propagation for the SMIRK 6 meter contest the following week. Conditions have been good on a daily basis into local areas, as well. Chuck, K19A, reported that he has now worked over 170 grids on 6 meters this summer alone, and the E-skip season isn't over yet! By the way, Chuck worked many of these grids using a G5RV tuned to 6 meters – he just recently got a small 6-meter beam up 25 feet! This shows that the HF crowd can succeed on at least 6 meter VHF, and without spending one plug nickel in the effort.

I know of 3 SMC members who were active on the CQ VHF, and 5 logs of SMC member calls have been received by the League Robot so far for the August UHF. As I write this, the Persieds Meteor Storm is scheduled to generate peak MS conditions on August 11-13. The Persieds is, by far, the biggest MS event of the year for VHF ops, and it can be a real operating treat. At its peak, the Persieds has the capability of producing 20 meter like band openings on both 6 and 2 meters – all in 10 to 30 second bursts, or course (sometimes even longer on 6 meters)! I have worked schedules in the Persieds as high as 222, and have attempted schedules on 432, too (and that was pre-JT 44,

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to boot). So, this particular meteor shower can be a big event, at times. Please let me know of SMC member activity reports for the shower.

The September VHF QSO Party is right around the corner, the weekend of September 13-15, 2003. This is a club competition event, and has been since 1999. Last year, and without much by way of club organization, the SMC scored 4th in the medium club category, with 9 entries and 469K in total points. The winner on the medium club category since the club competition's inception 4 years ago has been the PVRC, running between 2.2 to 4.2 million points in any one year. Last year, PVRC had 2.9 million points, with only 28 entries. To date, no club in the nation (and this includes Mt. Airy, PVRC, and Rochester) has been able to muster 50+ members for any unlimited club entry. Can we be the first club to do so? I challenge the serious VHF ops to run in the September contest. Just by relying on the existing VHF folks in the club, we should be able to easily double the number of entries and the number of points from last year. Then, I challenge the HF crowd within the SMC (i.e. almost everyone) to tune their dipoles for 6 and even 2 meters, and venture beyond 30 MHz. If even a fraction of the SMC club membership would get on 6 and / or 2 with their HF rigs, dipoles or beams (a 10 meter beam works nicely as a tunable driven element for 6 meters – you lose most of the gain of a 10 meter beam, but you at least end up gaining a rotatable 6 meter dipole in the process), we could easily burst into an unlimited entry. Let's shoot for being the 1st and only club to so far have an unlimited club entry in the September VHF run.



## 10 Years Ago in the SMC

- Some guy with the call WX3N shared stories of the exploits of he, **well known** contester AG9A, and some guy with the call WX9E from 8Q7.
- The Northern Illinois Dinner club was meeting at Alexander's Restaurant the 3rd Friday of every month.
- We were all updating our CQWW.CTY files to include the prefixes from the various pieces of the former Czechoslovakia and all the new prefixes for the Russian republics.
- ARRL 10mtr results were out and N0BSH was #1 in the Central Division and #9 in the country.

## Low Band Antenna URLs

By Phil, KB9CRY

*Ed. With the sunspots disappearing, these resources will come in handy.*

I've been reading where many guys are going to try to improve their low band reception.

The following is a listing of urls that feature a ton o info on low band antennas, etc.

With the info from these, and ON4UN's Low Band DXing book, I build my own transformers, resistor boxes, and pre-amps. My next project will be to construct one of these rotatable flag antennas featured in one of the sites. Gd luck & happy home brewing. Phil KB9CRY

<http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/1138/bev-page.html>

[http://www.ultranet.com/~oakridge/Beverage\\_info/RCT\\_Beverage/RCT\\_Beverage.html](http://www.ultranet.com/~oakridge/Beverage_info/RCT_Beverage/RCT_Beverage.html)

[http://www.hard-core-dx.com/nordicdx/antenna/loop/flag/flag\\_w7iuv.html](http://www.hard-core-dx.com/nordicdx/antenna/loop/flag/flag_w7iuv.html)

<http://www.hard-core-dx.com/nordicdx/antenna/index.html>

<http://www.angelfire.com/md/k3ky/page37.html>

<http://www.angelfire.com/md/k3ky/page20.html>



## Log File Converters

**Cabrillo:** <http://www.cabrillotools.com> has a small program that will convert just about any column based ASCII log into the Cabrillo format. You identifies each of the columns through mouse clicks, enters in the required header information and saves the log in the Cabrillo format. There are about 48 contests supported allready and Stew Perry is one of them.

**Misc Formats:** This is a general purpose log file converter that converts many different file formats to other file formats including ADIF to TR or CT. It's called LogConv and the URL is: <http://www.qsl.net/ka5wss/logconv/>

# CW Contesting Tips

By Scott, K9MA

*I offer below some operating procedures I feel would improve the contest experience for a lot of us, based largely on the fresh memories of the ARRL contest last weekend. These are my personal opinions, with which I don't expect all to agree, so take them for whatever they're worth. I'm not going to argue about them. I will note, however, that I place a high value on accuracy, regardless of what the log checkers do.*

1. Learn to zero-beat accurately. The station you are calling may have a clear window only a couple hundred Hz wide, and won't be able to hear you if you are even 100 Hz off. Sometimes it is useful to deliberately call a little off zero-beat, but you still have to know exactly where your transmitter is.

2. Don't send your exchange until the other station acknowledges your call correctly. However, don't repeat your call unnecessarily.

Example:

DX: TEST DX0DX

ME: K9MA

DX: K0MA 599 KW (DX busted my call)

ME: K9MA

DX: K9MA (Acknowledgement of corrected call, without exchange)

ME: 599 WI

Note that DX can be sure he got my call right, because I won't send the exchange unless I actually hear him repeat my call. If I send my exchange the first time, his acknowledgement could be wiped out by QRM, my attempt to correct it again could be lost in the pile-up, or DX may just fail to acknowledge the correction. All it took to avoid all this was for DX to send my call back to me one time.

3. Always acknowledge a corrected call. Even if you got it right the first time, the calling station may not be sure you did. Just send the corrected call, don't repeat the exchange if you already sent it.

4. Don't let your computer send faster than you can copy!

5. Try really, really hard not to call any dupes. Even harder if you are QRP.

6. When a dupe calls you anyway, don't argue, just work him. You may actually not be in his log.

7. For cut numbers, use only T and N. Don't use A or the letter O. If you are QRP, send "T5", as the leading T is distinctive. If individuality in your exchange is really important to you, go ahead and use A and O, but keep in mind you may be making copy more difficult for others.

8. When asked for a repeat, just send the requested information, not the whole exchange. Repeat the RST only if you sent something other than 599. (When signals are really weak, the 5NN may be useful as a "synch" pattern, though.)

9. Sign your call after every QSO, unless you got at least a piece of the call of another station and can specifically call that one.



## Secrets of Contesting #5

By Jim Neiger, N6TJ (From CQ-CONTEST)

Many in this country, at least, probably read last week of the Yale University research findings that if you THINK YOUNG, you will extend your life (on the average) ANOTHER SEVEN AND ONE-HALF YEARS. And further, that this singular "habit" is more important to your health than factors such as blood pressure and cholesterol.

Can you imagine this?

Thusly, I hereby announce that I have extended my personal goal of SERIOUS contest expeditions until I am Age 100. That's another 37 years, or ANOTHER 3 SOLAR MAXIMA! Wow. And then when I reach 100, I'll decide if I'll go another 5 years, or not. And another 5, and so on. I hope you all will be around to celebrate this with me.

Some are probably saying, "How silly is this? Neiger has definitely and finally gone over the edge"!

My challenge to ALL of you: please sign up to this plan of (1) thinking young, and (2) dumping pathetic excuses of WHY YOU CANNOT hit the contest DXpedition trail this fall, or putting in MAJOR efforts from home this and every year.

What if Yale is right? You, at least may benefit the most. And the rest will derive great benefit from your activity, and many more multipliers!

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what it was like to hang out with three or four hundred fellow contest junkies in the northern latitudes of a different continent. It was certainly an experience I will never forget.

My plane from Indianapolis to New York took off Monday morning, but the trip to Finland started long before that. Some people travel light, some don't. My teammate K3LR



does not. When it came time to outfit our station, we took the Cadillac approach. We basically took the 40 and the 20 meter run stations of the K3LR multi-multi station and shipped them to Helsinki. Desktop computers, big screens, Icom 781's. If we needed two, we took three. Or maybe four. OK, sometimes five.

Or, should I say, Tim shipped them. It took him two loads in a GMC Yukon to get it

to the shipper! It wasn't cheap, and it wasn't easy, but two weeks before we started out on the trip ourselves, the hassles of equipment transport were largely over.

New York was a zoo, of course. But climbing into a big jet for a non-stop to Helsinki from there made it worth it. The only bad thing about the flight was having to stare at N2AA's bald head for 8 hours! Seriously, it was fun to hook up with N2NT, N6RT, N2NC and Mister Able for the trip. Getting served free wine and great bread was also a plus. I've operated with Andy, John, and Gene a few times at K3LR, but it was fun to meet Doug, N6RT, for the first time. He was teamed up with N2NT, and he was so quiet you had to wonder if he could trip the VOX!

The trip was also an omen for the week ahead, because even as we left at 6 PM EST, the sun hardly ever went down. I knew, intellectually, that there would be very little darkness in Helsinki. But it is one thing to know something, and quite another thing to actually experience it.

We were met at the airport (at 9 AM local) by the guy who made it all happen for us the entire trip. Mike, W8ZY, works in sales for Nokia in Dallas and has been to Helsinki a couple of zillion times. In what must rank as one of the

all time best ham radio scams you will ever hear, Mike's boss told him to do whatever it took to keep K3LR happy for our week in Finland. Why? K3LR's company is a big customer, of course. This was too good to be true ...

Get in a taxi in New York and your cab will smell and you might see the street through the floorboard. Get in a taxi in Helsinki, and you'll be surrounded by leather, tinted windows, and a great stereo. Turbocharged Volvo. Very civilized.

Our hotel was in a big suburb called Espoo, which was easy to spot. Just look for the tribander on the roof. We stumbled out into the warmth of what would prove to be the first of many spectacularly beautiful days. I don't know who the Finn's paid off to get the WRTC weather, but they got their money's worth. The outdoor tables were populated with familiar faces -- N5KO, K3EST, K6AW. Yeah, we were in the right place.

European hotels are, well, small. But very nice. Except that you get the feeling that they don't have too many 85 degree (whoops, I mean 31 C) days because they don't have air conditioning. Or screens in the windows. And those heated towel racks tend to give a little extra zing to the stuffiness quotient.

It was immediately apparent that the Finns had done an incredible job. And especially Martti Laine, OH2BH. He was in so many places at once that you swore there had to be two or three of him. You knew this was going to be a different kind of WRTC when you reported to the main office and got your material. Out of a brand new box comes your very own cell phone, programmed with your call sent in CW as its ring tone. Want to talk to anyone? Ring 'em up, they're all in the directory. The beeps and chortles of the phones as the calls and SMS messages went flying around soon became part of the normal landscape of every get together.

Martti just solved every problem that came up. K1TO got seriously overcharged for his equipment shipping. Martti got on the phone and it was fixed. The hotel told K3LR and myself that our equipment crates, which were stored in the back room where the housekeeping people worked, would have to be moved. Martti made a call and it was all OK. And in between crises he sat down with Tim and I and gave us a quick tutorial on OH propagation. What an impressive guy. Internet access was everywhere, and we could play with a radio from a suite on the top floor. Neat stuff.

Take my advice -- never drink toasts with Russians. Hey, we're 1400 km from Moscow. The Russians are driving

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And having our radio friends with us for so many more years, we all win.

And what has been on many of our minds, the bad notions that ham radio, and contests are dying (at least in the USA), and have a limited future, are, as they say " a little pre-mature".

Maybe we can't attract many youngsters into the hobby. But we certainly have the potential to EXTEND our useful contesting lifetimes.

And I may not make the Top Ten every year, but at least if won't be for want of a serious effort.

Please join me in this quest. And thank you for reading this far.



## Jan 03 VHF SS Results

By Kevin Kaufhold (W9GKA)

Congratulations to everyone on their January VHF SS scores! The SMC finished 5th in the medium club competition, with 741,447 points, and 12 entries.

Some SMC members had fabulous scores. Three division records were set by SMC members, and a number of awards and top scores were also attained. The following SMC members submitting their score with SMC garnered the following awards and top scores:

WB9Z SOHP 182,999 points - # 8 in nation; winner of Central Division and Illinois section; # 1 top all time SOHP score in Illinois.

WA1MKE SOLP 26,675 Winner Indiana section; # 3 top all time SOLP score in Indiana.

WO9S SOLP 28,981 - # 6 top all time score in Illinois SOLP.

N9UM Rover 269,712 - # 4 in nation; Central Division RECORD.

KF9US Rover 211,830 - # 7 in nation; # 2 in division; # 2 top all time division score.

W9GKA SO Port 7,065 - # 2 in nation; central Division RECORD; Winner Illinois section.

Every score is important for the club competition, and the

following SMC members submitted scores towards the club aggregate. These folks deserve a big thank you and special recognition for also adding to the club score. They include:

N9HZ SOLP 3,354

KB9YSI SOLP 1,606

N9YZS SOLP 1,349

K9PG SOLP 70;

AI9L SOHP 1,898

K9TMS 5,916 Rover.

The following SMC members submitted entries in the contest but were not counted to the SMC club total, for one reason or another. They are as follows:

K2DRH SOLP 160,395 - # 1 nation; Central Division RECORD; Winner Illinois section. National winner SOLP the last three consecutive years.

W9GA SOHP 84,095 Winner SOHP Wisconsin section; # 6 top all time Wisc. score.

W9RVG Multi-Unlimited 51,282 Winner Central Division and Illinois Section; # 3 top score Multi-U in Illinois all time.

WB9SNR SOHP 36,960

K0PG Rover 33,805

K9ILT Rover 50,796

Lastly, there were a number of entries within the SMC service area that did not mark any club affiliation and are not currently SMC members. If any SMC member knows anyone who ran in either the Jan VHF SS or the June VHF, please ask them to join SMC.



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over here! RA3AUU pulled in in a very shiny Lexus. And my long time buddy Willy, UA9BA, has driven over with his Kazakh pals with a trunk load of ... well, it was some kind of clear liquid with revolutionary scenes painted on the labels. And it tasted like fire. I've never been in a room where the stuff went down that quick. At the time, the chance to sit in a room and trade lies with folks like Willy, N2AA, K3EST, K1AR, K1ZZ, N7BG -- and who knows who else -- seemed too good to pass up. All I can say is that I got loose enough to actually start thinking that K1AR was a nice guy. And I also acquired some new phonetics for my call -- "Russian Vodka."

That memory wasn't so pleasant the morning after. Thank goodness for those wonderful Finnish orange juice dispensers. The buffet breakfast was, well, spectacular. We weren't gonna starve this trip.

The word also seems to have gotten out about the three shipping crates in the housekeeping room that belong to the N9RV/K3LR team. People are trying to find out what we've got in there, and its been a hoot watching them get frustrated when we don't tell them. All in good fun, right?

At a kickoff meeting where the highlight was watching a film about a Finnish runner who stumbled in a track meet and got up to win the race, the real highlight was watching OH2BH handle the heat over the real time contest scoring system that would be in place for the contest. This was the first of many impressive performances by Martti, OH2BH, Pasi, OH2IB, and Jukka, OH6RX, in handling the ego's of competitive testers.

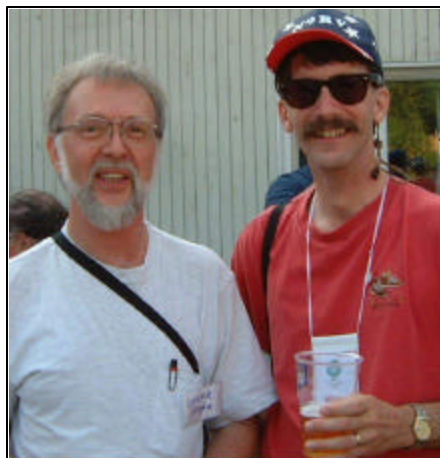
We then dutifully packed up to head off to a summer camp called Himos, a three hour bus ride away. In all honesty, this was probably the most disappointing aspect of the trip. This wasn't really the fault of the Finns. The camp was very pretty, and we were certainly well fed and the hospitality and congeniality were superb. But the two days of the lazy activity of drinking, eating, and attending various meetings and ceremonies was in stark contrast to the frenzy of station setup and contest warfare that we knew were just ahead.

But it was also a heck of a lot of fun. Himos is where the SRAL holds its big summer meeting, and the place resembles a hamfest and a campsite combined. And it was crawling with hams. I had a blast meeting guys like Juergen, OH4FR, who comes about as close to a W9RE twin as anyone you will ever see. N6TJ was a constant source of entertainment as the wily "old man" among the American competitors who was just "trying" to keep up with the young turks. And speaking of young guys, it was a blast getting to know guys like N6MJ, N2NL, and

particularly Lucas, LU1FAM, who was always glued to one of the demonstration station radios.

But Himos is not a place to go to get a good night's sleep. For one thing, there's no night. Just a couple of hours of twilight between 12 AM and 2 . The heat wave continued, and unlike the hotel, we didn't even have a fan. After flopping around for too many hours, I looked at the wall clock (which turned out to be wrong) and decided that it was 6AM, and

that I might as well hike down to the central camp to see if any NA was coming through on the demonstration station. When I got there, I discovered it was 3 AM, not 6 AM! The camp had been taken over by the --



ahem -- younger crowd, who were quite well, shall we say, lubricated? And the sight of an American working CW seemed to draw a larger and larger crowd, who were making some very vigorous points in languages I didn't understand. Maybe it was time to leave ...

When the station and referee selections were made during our last day, the atmosphere of frivolity largely evaporated. Maps were everywhere, and game faces were coming out. Tim and I found out that we would be on the easternmost edge of the operating site area, in an ancient town by the water called Porvoo. Would this be the magic QTH? Our host, who Tim met for a second before he vanished, assured us that it was.

It was all action when we finally got back to Espoo. Tim, Mike and I were paying the price for having all that stuff, because we sweated off a few of those sausages lugging the rice-boxes into our rental van. And thanks to all the intrigue that had gone on all week, we had quite a few voyeurs. There must have been ten guys with cameras taking pictures of our pile of boxes. Oh well. At least we were winning something.

Porvoo was a 90 minute drive, which Timmy and I made in the 1978 Volvo of our host, Tpsi, OH2HXT. Two things were made very clear during that trip. One, Tpsi's English was a lot better than my Finnish, but not quite good enough to chatter on with a ham sitting in the back

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

seat. Second, Topsis's car had a gas line leak. We're talking serious fumes, here. After a few minutes on the freeway, Timmy's head is hanging out the window like a Golden Retriever, entertaining Mike and referee Paoli, OH7BX, who were following in the rental van, to no end. In a fitting climax, we chug into a petrol station just as the tank goes bone dry. But we made it.

Topsi's place was as good as we could have hoped for. An unassuming little place in the middle of town, but on a nice little rise (the whole part of Finland where we were was very flat) and with antennas basically in the clear. Whatever it was, we were going to work with it. We later heard some amazing stories about other teams restringing antennas, taking down their masts and tribanders and putting them back up in other positions, or even demanding different QTH's. This was definitely a type A group of guys.

We immediately went to work setting up the station, with Tim in charge. Meanwhile, Topsis, our genial host, was ready to show us the town, take a dip in the sauna, and maybe sample some sausages. Of course, he'd never shared his roof with a couple of seriously wound up contesters! So I alternated between schmoozing with Topsis, now with the help of Paoli as an occasional interpreter, and fetching stuff from the boxes for Tim. I also ended up going grocery shopping with Kari, OH2xxx, a truly interesting fellow who drove what looked like a cross between a tricycle and a pickup truck.

Things were going like clockwork, even though we accidentally cut a headphone cable unpacking it (we had a spare) and one of the computers was DOA (another spare). But through all the self-congratulation over the prudence of our overpacking, we neglected to flip the backup PC's power supply switch to 220v before firing it up. Oh, yeah. It was dead now too.

Ah, but we are in Finland. Everyone has a computer, including our host's son, who is away for the weekend. Its getting past 10 PM and Tim is performing brain surgery on



our host's  
formerly  
i n t a c t  
computer,  
and voila! It  
all works.

Sleep at the  
Porvoo hotel  
was just  
great, and  
a f t e r

breakfast with the N5TJ/K1TO and S50A/S59AA teams who were also located close by, it was getting close to contest time, 3 PM local.

In retrospect, I wish we had been as thorough in our strategic preparation for the contest as we had with the hardware. Beyond an agreement that I would run most of the CW and Tim would run phone, and a determination to move multipliers and go after 2-point non-EU QSOs very aggressively, we essentially trusted our instincts to guide us. Especially in the multiplier department, that wasn't enough to cut it.

The Finn's came up with a ruling that, while totally fair, made the beginning of the contest about as strange as I have ever experienced. We had to turn down the volume knobs on our radios ten minutes before the start of the contest, and leave them there until blast-off at 1200z. After carefully loading in our OJ4M callsign, given to us by Paoli at 1150z, we essentially stared at the ceiling until the instant things started and then go! As a result, we spent the first two minutes Cqing into the ether on 15 CW, wondering if the band was even open.

But it did open, and we were off! How did it go? I'll continue that next time.



## W9DXCC

September 20, 2003

<http://www.qth.com/w9dxcc/>

## W0DXCC

October 18, 2003

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