

# THE BLACK HOLE



ARRL SS Unlimited Team Champs 2000, 2001, 2002

Official Journal of The Society of Midwest Contesters

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## From the Editor

by Pat Barkey, N9RV

The individual and collective contesting accomplishments of SMC members continue to amaze me. We are such a big club, with so many "type A" members, it's just hard to keep track of it all. Maybe you start with club president K9PG, who takes #1 in the World in the ARRL CW DX Contest in 2003, and then does it again, two weeks later, on SSB. Not to be outdone, WB9Z, AE9B (this month's profile) and NWOL went all out from PJ2T in the ARRL SSB and not only won the world in the M/2 category, but beat all the multi-multi's while they were at it. And don't forget the SMC #1 team's victory in the September CW Sprint, a first for our club.

Those few highlights don't even scratch the surface of the mountain of accomplishments we've piled up over the last twelve months. Even with the sunspots going down, there's a whole of folks around here still pumped up enough about



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## 10 Years Ago in SMC

- AA9D wrote a great comparison of various sites used by the "Bald Knob VHF Group" for their annual June VHF contest outing.
- Our section chairs provided great summaries of SMC activity from their states ... hint hint!
- The ARRL announced this great new system where you can pick your own callsign ... even old ones nobody was using anymore.
- K3EST declared contacts with X5, Serbs operating in Bosnia-Herz were not valid in CQ contests.

## Member Profile: AE9B

by Jerry Rosalius, WB9Z and Howard Dybedock, AK9F

If there were one word to describe our guest in the Member Profile this issue, it would be "competitive"! Tom Baugh, AE9B, thrives on competition. And it's that lust for competition that triggered Tom's attraction to ham radio and the SMC. A Graduate of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, Tom says he has a loyalty to Southern and the Salukis for the excellent education he received and the opportunity to compete on the football field. As a scholarship athlete and member of the 1983 National Championship college team, Tom went on to play NFL football for the Kansas City Chiefs and Cleveland Browns. In fact, AE9B probably has the distinction of being able to say he handled the ball more



AE9B demonstrates his competitive spirit while playing center

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# The Black Hole



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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. The club doesn't collect annual dues, but instead funds everything through member donations. For more information contact one of the following officers:

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## SMC Needs Your Financial Support

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

A few years ago, we decided to eliminate formal dues of \$10 per year, and instead, maintain funds through member donations.

We encourage all members to consider making an annual donation to the club. Your generous donations allow us to continue to expand our support of radio sporting.

You can make your donation two ways:

1. Send a check, money order or cash to:

JON OGDEN, NA9D  
905 SURREY LN  
ALGONQUIN IL 60102-2058

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

# W9SMC

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

## SMC Stuff



**Badges**

**Order  
Today!**

To get your SMC stuff, see the last page of the newsletter or visit the SMC website, <http://www.w9smc.com/merchandise.htm>



**Shirts**

# What Does It Take to Win the World?

By Tom Baugh, AE9B

*The guys are returning to Signal Point for this year's ARRL DX SSB. Work them early and often. Ed.*

With the contest complete, our PJ2T ARRL DX SSB Multi-2 effort appears to have been successful. A gauge for success is always relative. I have been involved in a few efforts in which "success" was defined as getting several new hams to operate. But this is different. This was an effort to put us on the map, to place our names and callsigns among the world's top operators. The following is the complete story from the Midwest guys who have apparently "Won the World."

## KEY ELEMENT #1 Team Selection



Marty Tippin, NW0L, is a young Anti-CW bigot. He actually earned his stripes as a competitive RTTY operator and fast talker (SSB runner) having coined the phrase "Adolescent Chipmunk". Marty is a naturally competitive, slightly hyperactive computer programmer from the Ozarks of Missouri. A self-starter and excellent team player, Marty excels in computer networking and everything associated with the technical aspects of software and hardware integration. He's an excellent high band running operator with a great understanding of efficiency. Jerry Rosalius, WB9Z, is a well known low band operator and consistent "Top Op" from the Midwest. I first met Jerry (more than just casually) just weeks prior to the contest at his well stocked Antenna farm outside of Kankakee, Illinois. The purpose of my visit was to see how he did so well in all the low band contests. I was particularly interested in his beverage and other listening antenna setup. I got to know Jerry and his wife Lori pretty well and enjoyed their open and inviting personalities, typical of Midwest country folks. Jerry has more experience than both Marty and I combined. It is his experience

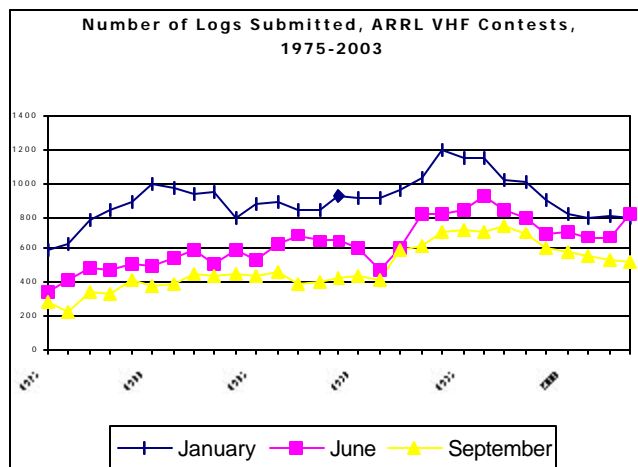
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# VHF Column

by Kevin Kaufold, W9GKA

## Trends in VHF Contesting, Part II.

In the last issue of the Black Hole, I noted that two very large and pronounced booms had occurred in January VHF SS log entries over the course of the last 55 years since 1948. Through an historical review of the radio literature, I concluded, that these booms and large increases were likely the result of a mix of regulatory changes and technological impacts which then generated demographic effects upon VHF contest activity. In each case, after the initial boom wore off, log entries then decreased. I also noted that the number of participating clubs also rose and fell in accord with the boom or bust of demographics.



In reviewing the historical evidence, I concentrated only on the January VHF Sweepstakes, because of an extensive interplay between the VHF SS and VHF clubs. This demographic effect is not just limited to the VHF Sweepstakes however. It has occurred in the other two major VHF contests, as well. The following graph concentrates on the 2nd boom period, and shows the number of entry logs for the three "majors" since 1975.

The 2nd large boom in the 1990's is clearly evident in the above graph for all three contests. Of particular interest is the parallel course for all three contests. When these recent levels are reviewed, one certainly understands the concern by the ARRL as to the future state of VHF contests. The trend has been definitely in the downward direction with all three majors, although very recently, that trend may be stabilizing somewhat.

The most recent June VHF contest displays a pronounced increase in the number of log entries. In fact, the 2003 June VHF QSO Party is the only contest that has exceeded the

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# Cabrillo Web Applet

*From email by Dan Henderson, N1ND*

The ARRL Contest Branch is please to announce that a web-based applet is now available for participants to use in order to generate and email ARRL Contest logs in the required Cabrillo file format. The first ARRL Contest for which the web applet is available is the recently completed 2004 RTTY Roundup. The applet, while intended for smaller log submissions, can be used for submissions of any size. It will be available for all ARRL events that require electronic logs in the Cabrillo file format.

Thanks to Bruce Horn, WA7BNM, and with the support of several other amateurs, it is now possible for participants to create Cabrillo contest logs on the web. Bruce is developing templates for each ARRL contest, which will allow persons that paper log, or those whose logging programs will not generate a Cabrillo file, to create electronic logs for submission to the League. Bruce has provided a homepage at [www.b4h.net/cabforms/](http://www.b4h.net/cabforms/) where links will take users to the various contest templates.

The web applet works in two parts. First, the user is prompted through the information required to create the Cabrillo file header, including ARRL/RAC section, Callsign used, Callsigns of operators, Entry class, Entry mode (if applicable), Power level, Sent exchange information, Club (if applicable), and Operator's name and address. Where appropriate, drop-down boxes are used to allow the submitter to select the correct information.

Once you have finished supplying the information for the header, the next screen allows you to input the data for each individual QSO. The user may either type in the information for each QSO, or they may cut and paste the necessary information (band, date, time, call copied, received RST, received exchange) from another source. Make sure to leave a space between each piece of data on the QSO line and to use a new line for each QSO.

Once you have entered all of the QSO data, click on the "SUBMIT QSO INFO" button at the bottom of the page. The applet will then check for any errors in format. If everything is correct, the applet will display the completed file, where you can check your information one last time. Finally, click the "SUBMIT CABRILLO LOG" button at the bottom and the applet will automatically email the entry to the correct address for the contest, as well as send a copy to you for your records.

Upon submission, the applet-created log will be processed as all other submissions. If the contest robot finds problems, the appropriate emails will be sent back to the sub-

mitter for handling or if the log is clean, the numbered receipt will be sent.

If you have questions about the web applet, contact [contests@arrl.org](mailto:contests@arrl.org)

And again... Many thanks to Bruce Horn, WA7BNM for his work in developing this web application. Bruce, you are one of the unsung heroes of contesting!



## Seven Habits for Success

*by Pat Barkey, N9RV*

1. Operate CW. Call CQ DX and work Europeans whenever you get the chance. Europeans are great CW operators and you'll get better every day you do this.
2. Learn how to type. Take a typing course and learn the keyboard. Then get some printouts of your old contest logs and type the callsigns into a word processor. Then get some more logs and do it again. Keep doing that until you're totally confident typing in callsigns.
3. Use every crutch you can. Don't have a digital voice keyer? Don't have a super check partial callsign database interfaced with your contest software? You're competing against people that do. Get with it.
4. Operate in contests/bands/modes that stretch your abilities. Do you only operate SS? Try a DX contest. Only SSB? Try CW. Never call CQ during contests? Try it.
5. Trade notes with your peers after contests. Maybe you didn't learn too much from K1AR's Contest column about his 400 hour from PJ2. But you might learn a lot from talking to others right after the contest. When things were good, what antennas worked, or how they worked 100 JA's on 15 when you only worked 5.
6. Listen to how the pro's do it. They're in control, running 'em fast. What's their secret? They're coming back to complete call signs, not letting their piles go on forever, sending or saying no more than what it takes to complete a Q and get on to the next one. Listen and learn.
7. Learn propagation. You'll copy the weak ones a lot better if you know what to expect. Like the long path Australian rolling in in the afternoon in the middle of your 20 meter European run. And the fluttery guy who keeps calling you on 15 in the morning just might be a YB.

## DXpeds for ARRL DX SSB

From email by Dan Henderson, N1ND

Fellow SMC'ers are heading out to be DX for the ARRL DX SSB Contest this coming weekend.

Paul K9PG is going back to WP3R. I know Paul is after the World Single OP, all band, low power, World Record (*ed. He already did it on CW a couple weeks ago.*). Paul has Won the World before a couple of times on high power, but lets support him in his quest to win the World on Low Power AND set another WORLD RECORD. Be prepared to QSY as Paul is SO2R and wants to work everyone on all 6 bands.

Chad WE9V is going to 9Y and I'm sure he would appreciate all the contacts that the club can send his way. I believe Chad will be signing 9Y4ZC. Let's support him ON ALL BANDS. (*ed. He says fatherhood will make this his last trip ... EVER! We'll see.*)

Fellow SMCers Tom AE9B, Marty NW0L and I are heading back to PJ2T (*ed. See AE9B's page-three article on last year's effort.*). We are going to try to duplicate our Top World Win last year in Multi-2. We are joined this year by Geoff W0CG who owns the PJ2T house and built a lot of the station. Plus Jeff K8ND who is the PJ2T station manager. With this additional help we feel like we got a good shot at the "World Record in Multi Op Two Transmitter". We need all the "help" we can from fellow SMC operators to pull off a Top World Win and a possible New World Record.

P40A will be active... and that will be KK9A. He'll either be going SOAB or 20 meters.... but be sure to put him in the log if you tune across him.

Mike-WO9Z, Don-W9IU and Kevin-WN9O will be in Jamaica as 6Y8Z

Please work them on all the bands you can and lets show the US and the World that SMC not only wins Sweepstakes but also kicks ass in the " International Radio Competitions"



## Build a RF Reversing Switch

by Pat Barkey, N9RV

Thinking of running a single band contest? Or is a tri-bander your only "real" antenna on the high bands? If you've got a second radio and antenna, and a couple of A/B relays, you might benefit from building up a little "swap" switch that will let you switch antennas and radios quickly.

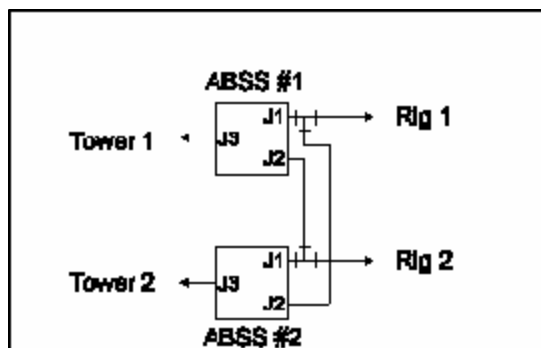


Figure 1 - RF cabling

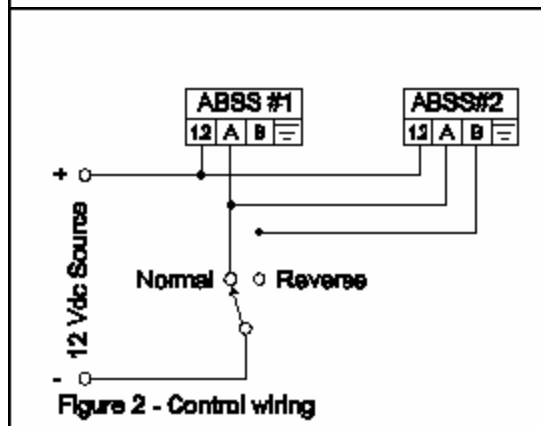


Figure 2 - Control wiring

(From the Top Ten Devices Web Site -- [www.qth.com/topten](http://www.qth.com/topten)).

If, when you find a nice multiplier on your second radio, flip the switch (not while you're transmitting!!!) and call it on your "big" antenna. Switch it back when you're done and resume your run.



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contesting to put up 195 foot rotating towers (WB9Z), put up a bunch of temporary yagis on lift-a-loft's and host a multi-multi (AE9B), or jump on planes and boats to put DX islands across the globe on for contests (K9QQ, K9CC, and tons of others). And plenty of other member celebrated their own accomplishments, like getting on for a CW contest or making their first QSOs on top band.

But the accomplishment that has given us the most pride in recent years has been getting so many members on the air for two weekends in November for the SS contest. The contesting world has watched in awe as W9/W0 contesters, both seasoned and green, flipped on their radios and loaded up whatever they had to pile up the points and make us the club to beat. Or at least most people were watching. Our competition in northern California was evidently doing more than that, and based on some pretty hard rumors will end up ending our three year reign as SS Unlimited Club Competition champs.

Of course we want to fix that problem mighty quick! It will be a big year for SMC, NCCC, and any of the other challengers in the 2004 SS, and that is good for all of the clubs involved and good for the contest. My question for all of you is, do you want to do anything else? We're a pretty big group of pretty active contesters, and we've proven that we can accomplish anything that we put our minds to do.

As a pretty new member of SMC, I see three big SMC activities every year: SS, the Dayton suites, and the W9SMC reflector. There's other stuff -- W9GKA's stirring up the VHF activity, some of us are into Sprints and potato guns and what not. But is there anything more you want to do as a club? Like, maybe, get the troops out for some other contests? Pump up the state QSO parties? Have a big social gathering in the summer?

Let's hear what you think.



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**than other player. The position he played during his football career was center. This also makes him a hands-on kind of guy when he competes on the radio. A resident of a small community near Kansas City, Missouri, Tom has been building a competitive station at his home, and though outside the SMC Circle, his allegiance is to the SMC and he pledges his points to SMC when possible.**

**SMC-** Tom give us a bit of background on your ham radio history, when and how did you get interested in amateur radio?

**AE9B-** I was an eleven-meter guy through most of my college days and into my thirties. I never knew of ham radio or anything about different bands or modes. I traveled a lot in the off-season and just ran a C.B. in my big Ford Crew Cab. It was apparent that some guys were running "big power" so one day I gathered enough nerve to ask my neighbor (KB9NJP) Bob Drake in Brookfield, Illinois (an Electrical Engineer for Comm Ed.) if he could build me a small amplifier for my C.B.. Bob asked if I would first read this book "Now You're Talking". Excited to even have a maybe answer, I read the whole thing in a few days, recognized that this new "ham thing" gave me a chance to legally use "lots of power" and the rest is history.

**SMC-** Once you got on the radio how long did it take for you to get into Contesting? Were you a DXer first like a lot of us?

**AE9B-** I was a fast learner but didn't realize there was a contest community until I had moved to Kansas City and met Dave, KGØUS. He introduced me to contesting. I knew there were contests but hadn't, to that point, been in any clubs or such which offered knowledge needed to understand the whole contesting concept. I think that is one area that contesting hams take for granted. Many of the hams out there don't understand contesting. They just go about making contacts for W.A.S. etc. like I did. Someone needs to introduce people to this activity.

**SMC-** Right now, I believe you're into multi-op more than single-op Contesting. Is that true? If so, can you tell us why? Tell us how you and your crew put up temporary towers and yagi antenna systems for the contest.

**AE9B-** I enjoy both single and multi op contesting. I have several certificates for single op from a variety of sponsors. I have been active in Multi Op contesting originally because I had never done it before. It seems to be the pinnacle of the contest arena. The difficulty in

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getting multiple radios, computers, antennas, filters etc. to work together without interference, to mesh with and integrate with computer's which are networked is quite a challenge. But it is the human component that I enjoy most. I enjoy teamwork. I thrive on assembling a group of "driven" people for the challenge of competition. Probably due to my athletics background, I find no better pleasure than to work hard alongside a group of guys (and gals) who share knowledge, sweat and shivers (putting up antennas) for the challenge of competing against others doing the same. Somewhere in my soul, I have come to realize that without friends and family, life would have very little pleasure. So, I try to find as much opportunity as possible to bring together people and make the efforts meaningful. Winning is a goal, but losing alongside a bunch of hard working friends ain't bad either.

**SMC-** You've been working to get a competitive station off the ground at your home QTH. What do you currently



**AE9B at one the operating positions of his well equipped Missouri multi-op shack.**

have and what's your goal?

**AE9B-** Actually I don't have much. My current year long setup is just a Force 12 C4XL for 10-40 at about 60 feet, wires for 80M and 160M, and a ¼ wave vertical on 160M. I have a lot of "seasonal antennas" and the capability of raising many more at a given notice. In the pole barn I store a 4-square for 40M, a 4 element 20M beam w/ 45 foot boom, several top loaded verticals for 80M and 160M, a couple spare tribanders, a couple butternut verticals, and my beverage wires. Setting all that up for a multi-op is a challenge. As for radios, I use exclusively 1000MP's. I have 3 of them here right now. Amps are a mix of KW stuff. Drake L4B, and a couple of Kenwood TL-922A's. When we get all the guys together a few of them pitch in and bring equipment. My station is set-up for plug and play multi-op. All of the 6 positions have computers, electrical receptacles, and antenna switches waiting to be

connected. As for my goal, I'm not sure I'll be doing much more multi-op from home. Maybe multi-single or multi-two. I have quite a bit of difficulty getting the large number of operators needed to keep 6 radios going for 48 hours. Ideally a crew of almost 20 guys is needed to share radio duties. It's tough getting 20 humans to pull together on a weekend in today's busy world.

**SMC-** Tom, you're out in the far Western regions of the SMC, in fact you're not too far East of Kansas City. How'd you get tangled up in the "Black Hole" gang?

**AE9B-** Well, KØOU is a member and coordinator but the truth is that K9PG was instrumental in my becoming an ANT. I participate kinda regularly in contests and Paul recognized that and invited me to join. It's amazing what you can get done by just asking.

**SMC-** I know you and Marty NWØL are really into the RTTY contest doing it multi-op with other op's from your area, that's really cool. Tell us about your expedition to North Dakota for one of the RTTY Contest.

**AE9B-** Marty is really a big RTTY guy. I do enjoy it but not nearly as much as him. There is a core group here in KC that talks and puts into action some plans and Marty is one of them. Our local Kansas City DX Club is an older bunch of guys who have done it all (supposedly) so some of us young whippersnappers tend to be "outspoken" about doing things and not just talking about it. Marty mentioned that N.D. is very rare in RTTY and wondered if anyone was interested in trying a contest from there. That alone is pretty surprising because Marty is about as wimpy as they get when it comes to cold WX. Anyway, WØZAP and team guy and average operator, KØLW a very good rigging and setup man who doesn't mind the cold, Marty and I all traveled a couple of hundred miles straight north and set up a temporary (weekend plus) station at a very accepting (although mold infested) lakefront cottage (of course the lake was 20" thick in January). We participated, giving out ND to whoever wanted it and had a great time just video taping adolescent humor like guys tend to do when they're off on their own. Signs like "Mount Marty College" and "Get your Licks here" become pretty humorous when you with a couple of good friends for a weekend.

**SMC-** What are some of the most exciting experiences you have experienced in ham radio? Anyone in particular you want to mention that has influenced you.

**AE9B-** There is obviously one that stands out the most and that is our recent #1 World win at PJ2T with Jerry (WB9Z) and Marty (NWØL). I have been in ham radio since 1997

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**Tom logs another one while cruising en-route to the 2003 World High Multi-op championship in the ARRL DX-SSB contest from PJ2T on Curacao.**

and to have a #1 finish under my belt is very humbling. I know that people have tried for decades and have not come close. I feel very fortunate to have been in the right place at the right time with the right guys to pull that off. It was truly a special weekend I will always remember and the way the whole thing was pulled off was just as incredible.

I have a lot of fond memories of the “temporary setups we have done from my house. It has been a lot of work to just get these weekends off the ground. To compete with the other Multi-Multis is a challenge and from the middle of nowhere it is even tougher as the SMC all knows.

**SMC-** Tom, that was pretty modest. You guys not only cruised to Number 1 for Multi-2 in the 2003 ARRL DX SSB Contest, but you had the highest score of ANY multi-op category! You have played competitive football in college and the NFL, please tell us about those days. How did the competitive edge that propelled you into professional football reflect into your interest in radio contesting?

**AE9B-** My interest in radio contesting and my career in professional football have very few similarities. The drive I have for success in competition is evident in all of my life. I think successful people all have that inner drive. Most, I believe, do not fear the challenge; they take it on for what it is. There is no reason to fear a challenge unless it threatens you or your morals and character. Ham radio contesting is an honest, decent, game. It provides mental and physical dilemmas. It provides excitement and requires skill. These are the components for any challenge.

I still cherish the years that I played football, especially professionally, but those are memories. I try to look forward to a new challenge each day and attack each one as I have trained all my life. With good honest hard work, a sense of humor when possible and the goal to achieve what is possible. Somebody wins each contest, why not me?

**SMC-** Please tell us about your personal life right now. I know you have a wonderful wife and two daughters. I believe your daughters are very competitive in sports, is that correct?

**AE9B-** I have a great and supportive family. Christine is a sophomore, active in athletics and a Straight A student. She got her general license when she was 10 years old (13 WPM) and basically has the world in her little finger. She is driven, goal oriented, and a very nice well-adjusted kid. Sarah is in 7th grade. She too enjoys sports and has a flair for design. She enjoys reading in her spare time (over 50 books this past summer). She too is an excellent student but might have gotten a B or two. Jeannie is my high school sweetheart and also a recent ham (KCØINA). We’ve been married since 1986 just after I got drafted in the NFL. She’s a solid support system that I truly need having come from a less than stellar family. She’s looking forward to her first trip to Curacao this winter (without the kids) and spending a little time with Lori (WB9Z’s XYL) sipping those umbrella laden drinks.

**SMC-** What is your occupation now....what puts the bacon on the table?

**AE9B-** I’m currently a construction project manager/superintendent for a small firm in Kansas City. I’m well compensated for a position I enjoy. But I’ve always got my ears open for new opportunities. I am now, and will always remain, a free agent

**SMC-** Are there any other hobbies that command your attention?

**AE9B-** I tend to drive hard on one activity for a while then move on to others. I have carved and painted ducks, hunted, fished (still travel to Canada when possible), built cabinetry, read books and a variety of other things. But right now my two active kids provide weekly games as my entertainment during the school year. Volleyball, basketball and track fill most evenings and many weekends.

**SMC-** We’ve heard some real funny stories or off the wall experiences from others we’ve interviewed. Are there any you’d like to pass along?

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**AE9B-** My first amplifier was a Drake L4B and having been a ham for only 9 months or so I had no idea what I was in for. I had read the manual carefully, and was getting ready to fire it up for the first time but nothing happened. The guy I bought it from said to call if I had any questions. After a few minutes on the phone we got down to the basics. Is the amp plugged in? Yes! Is the coax going from the radio to the amplifier input? Yes! The antenna is hooked to the amp output? Yes! Then I paused..... "Oh here it is...." as I reached for the red High power output wire. When my arm touched the case of the Drake and arc jumped out of that wire, through my arm. I let out a yell while still holding the phone and trying to break free from the high voltage. Just then I heard a click and recognized immediately that a breaker has popped. There was Silence..... then the voice on the other end said, "Tom..... are you there.....?" I calmly replied, let me call you right back". Other than a small burn at the tip of my index finger and an L shaped burn on my forearm where it touched the case.... I was fine.

**SMC-** You sound like a real busy guy....does that leave you enough time for radio?

**AE9B-** Probably not enough time. I wish I could spend more time traveling to nice places to play radio and some time will. I enjoy life too much to slow down for very long. Ham radio is probably one of my more relaxing hobbies. But I work a job like most people and sometimes the long hours wear you out. I do what I can. I get up every morning and hope for another sunrise.

**SMC-** Where do you see Contesting and Ham Radio in general going in the future?

**AE9B-** Honestly, I'm concerned. I recognize that there are more participants than ever in contesting but the average age has to be high. The average age of hams is high. I would really like to see more young folks in radio. I like all of the new innovations (SO2R), networked computers, integrated computers and radios, and such but don't know what it will take to overcome what will certainly be seen as a tremendous loss of a large portion of our hobby to age. I sure hope everyone will try to pass along as much knowledge as possible to as many other hams as they can. Much of the old will be lost... if we allow it to be.

**SMC** – Thanks Tom, for a most interesting interview. And good luck on your future in ham radio contesting. Anyone wanting to get a bit more acquainted with AE9B, please check into his personal web site at [www.qsl.net/ae9b](http://www.qsl.net/ae9b). The subject of our next MemberProfile will be John Battin, K9DX. Be watching for it.

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January VHF SS in the number of log entries submitted. Some in the League feel that this may be due to the emphasis and attention given to the matter just prior to the running of the June event. Others are of the opinion that band conditions were so great in the 2003 June contest that numerous ops turned in their wonderful scores, rather than merely operating but then never submitting a log entry. I feel it is the combination of both that may be responsible for the increase, especially since the 2003 September results continued its own downward trend. The fact that many hundreds of hams run the contests but then never submit a score to the League produces an under-estimation of activity levels to the contests. It is thus somewhat unclear whether the reduced number of log entries is evidence of reduced activity levels in general, or is merely evidence of more people simply not turning in their logs. Many people just will not submit a log entry unless they generate a large score, at which time they certainly will turn in their log, and will do so right away! The 2003 June VHF may be reflective of the wonderful tendency in the ham psyche to brag about their great scores while completely forgetting their small ones. It's as if their smaller efforts never took place!

**Current Thoughts.** Since the publication of Part I of this article (it was published in the NCJ, as well as the Black Hole), several additional thoughts have been either written about or conveyed orally to me concerning the topic. I want to summarize some of those items here.

VHF Nets, which are often closely linked to VHF club efforts, also keep activity levels up. Gene Zimmerman, W3ZZ, has recently commented on his own personal observations regarding the loss of a VHF net in the North Carolina area in the 1980's. After the net folded, activity levels decreased remarkably. The same general thing occurred in the plains states after the WB0DRL contest station ended its great tenure in the 1990's. Once the informal grouping of operators associated with WB0DRL folded, overall activity levels on VHF/UHF and the microwaves decreased substantially over a four state area of Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Oklahoma. What a great impact one multi-op had on several states over such a long time period - such a loss to the hobby since then. Formal clubs, informal grouping of operators, and VHF nets are all critically important in establishing and maintaining VHF activity levels both during and in-between VHF contests.

The electronic nature of communications regarding radio contests may be having an impact too, both good and bad. As to the good, the League's e-mail contest rate newsletter, the e-mail propagation bulletin, the interactive nature

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of the contest results and summaries, the new LOTW program, and the numerous on-line contest oriented reflectors may all be generating a positive impact upon the general state of amateur radio contesting. I am particularly impressed with the electronic response to the mess-up of the dates in QST on the 2004 January VHF SS. (It reminds me of the 1976 January VHF SS fiasco that was alluded to in my first article). Even though QST was off by a week on its announcement date of the contest, I counted 5 separate e-mails that I received via various reflectors informing recipients of the correct dates. By the time the contest rolled around, the serious contesters all knew the correct date, although some casual ops were still heard on the calling frequencies on Saturday of the wrong date calling "CQ Contest". Such is life.

As to the negative side of electronic communications, the electronic log submission requirement may still be causing an impediment to log entries. It is always so much fun dancing with the robot! It took me three tries to submit my 2004 January VHF SS scores, for instance, and I have made many prior submissions to the robot. In an effort to reduce the problem with submissions, the League has recently introduced an applet for small log. Maybe, that will help. There is also continuing concern being expressed from some contesters who feel that the absence of the line scores in QST is reducing a contest focus and presence in the magazine. To counteract that complaint, the League's web-site is regularly being upgraded for side-bars, the publication of early contest results ahead of the QST publication schedule, and other items of interest to contesters not generally available in QST. There may be merit to these concerns both as to the robot and as the elimination of the line scores. But, electronic communication is definitely the future. I tend to believe that we are at the end of the era in printed magazines. Over time, economic constraints will continue to push everything on-line. Witness our own Black Hole. I remember a print version many years ago! We might as well not debate the point any further. If log submissions are currently being adversely impacted by the shift to the on-line electronic reporting of contests, I feel this is a necessary impact, nonetheless. I would prefer having this impact being felt now rather than later, when a shift to electronic information would occur much too late, leaving the general state of amateur contesting way far behind in the dust of a by-gone era of print medium.

Also, the on-line results of the 2003 September VHF contained an interesting graph of the number of QSO's made in recent contests. While the number of log submissions have stabilized and / or continued a gradual decline, the number of QSO's made in the contests have definitely been increasing, and rather dramatically, too. This is likely the result of the newer HF rigs now having one or

more VHF bands in them, as well as there being a greater reliability and availability of microwave equipment. I also feel that rovers are making a huge and positive impact here – many of the rovers are now fully stocked with microwave bands. I see the QSO count increase to be an especially encouraging sign in the state of VHF contesting.

All of the microwave activity has had a negative impact on the smaller single op stations that cannot effectively compete against a well-equipped station having a rack of microwaves. The concern here is that all the contests have become de facto microwave events (this was expressly stated in one of W3ZZ's columns, but it has been a general grumble of a complaint for some time now). Some experienced operators are thus pushing for a limited SO class, ala the limited multi. There is also some support for a contest limited to only the VHF bands. And, there are additional arguments being made for the introduction of yet more and varied types of contests, in the spirit of the Europeans where a VHF contest occurs of some type on almost a weekly basis.

The limited SO has some interesting aspects to it, while I am afraid that a VHF only contest would send out the wrong signal as to band usage (the CQ WW VHF is currently limited to 6 and 2 anyway, so we already have a VHF only event). And, I am not sure that the European example is a close fit to the situation in the US. In Europe, the population density is much greater than in the US. Imagine scrunching all 250 million + people currently residing in the US into the land mass east of the Mississippi River – that is about the size of most of the European continent. Such a great population density might support a weekly contest format. I doubt if the vast plains of the Midwest and west would do so, however. I suspect that the development of more specialty contests of a greater variety and scope would end up looking a lot like the current UHF and 10 Gig events. Lots of activity in the densely packed areas of the NE corridor and California, but not much elsewhere. Our demographics and geographical size present a somewhat different picture than the European example.

One last item of interest, and of concern. The League is now formally proposing the elimination of any code requirement for all amateur bands. While this may align with recent international trends and efforts, I fear that a no-code authorization will further erode activity on the VHF bands. This is exactly the kind of regulatory impact that I noted in my initial article. Whenever alternative regulatory or technological activities occur, VHF contest activity falls off. Wider usage of the HF bands may very well result in a concurrent reduction in usage of the VHF

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bands, at least until people once again wander up to the VHF and UHF spectrum to try it out. Perhaps no-code is inevitable (I personally hate to see it come to pass, though.). But it likely will reduce VHF activity for a while.

The graph, and an accompanying Excel spreadsheet, is the work product of Curt Roseman, K9AKS. It is used with his permission. Curt co-wrote the first article noting demographic effects in VHF Contesting (the article was cited in Part I of my thoughts). Curt pioneered the use of historical research for contest analysis, and my conclusions on the subject merely supplement his earlier writings in many ways.

See, "Day-to-Day Operating: Activity Nets", Gene Zimmerman, QST, Nov. 2003, p.93-94.

The information on the aftermath of the WB0DRL multi-op comes directly from NOJK in a recent e-mail.



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and tireless endurance that we relied on to propel us through the tough times. His endurance is second to none and became a driving force in our effort.

I'm Tom Baugh, AE9B, A middle aged, fat, bald guy typical of many hams, but with a burning desire for competition. I'm not sure what drives other people but I'm driven by competition. Although not nearly as competitive as when I was physically propelling myself into opponents in the NFL, I still like a good battle. Perhaps one of my assets (it's hard to talk about your own) is the ability to diagnose, compare and evaluate statistics and probability to position myself or the team for the best chance of success (kind of like a good coach).

As with all competitions, the measure of success is victory. In the world of radio sport, winning requires more than desire, more than good equipment, more than good operators. It is typical of many sports, where combining preparation, ability, and study of the conditions and opponents provides an improved chance of success. But unlike most sports, not everyone shows up at the same playing field for this competition. In fact your selection of playing field is just as important if not more important than any of the other factors affecting the final results. Selection of the playing field becomes part of the game plan.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #2 Site Selection**

Marty, NW0L, asked me a while back if I was interested in going with him to PJ2T for this contest and I had com-

mitted very early along with another friend Rick, WOZAP. When Rick had to bow out due to a conflict, Marty and I asked around within the Kansas City DX Club and expanded our selective invitations to members in other contesting clubs. Marty and I were actually considering doing two separate single band competitions when Jerry, WB9Z, signed on as our 3rd team member. All three of us had been to Signal Point before and were all looking forward to a return visit to the improved site. I was particularly excited about the addition of a new 160M beverage to EU and spent every off-contest evening making contacts with the appreciative Europeans and off-contest daylight hours working everyone who was interested. Arriving on the island a little early and meeting with Geoff Howard, (W0CG) at the house, we discussed the work recently completed and the success of the PJ2T club and the station in recent months.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #3 Planning**

After some prodding by Jerry, the three teammates sat down to discuss our plans for the contest. I had looked at the results from the prior two years. I found an interesting statement that the Multi 2 class had not become popular outside of the U.S. I also noted that in prior years the M/S scores were comparable to and in some cases better than the Multi 2 scores. It was obvious that we all wanted to operate as much as possible and we would have the best opportunity to score high with 2 radios instead of one. But with only three operators, we knew this would be a challenge to our endurance. We were fortunate to have Mr. Endurance (WB9Z) on our team. Marty and I compliment each other, as he stays up late and I get up early -- but Jerry just keeps on going. Armed with propagation predictions and prior contest logs, I had previewed what is really an easy game plan for those operating from the Caribbean: Point all antennas North and Run Run Run! So our first day plans were based on those pre-game arrangements. We would run Multi-2, with WB9Z and NW0L starting the show, and AE9B taking over for NW0L in the middle of the first night. Just prior to the contest, we find that one of the main radios is down. All three of us are most comfortable with Yaesu radios, and one of the two was down. Fortunately, the PJ2T group had a spare 1000MP locked away for "emergency" use; after some creative locksmithing, it was installed and ready to go.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #4 Teamwork**

Marty and I had been through this before: The contest just starts and some problem creeps up, and the guy who's supposed to be resting needs to get up and re-

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solve a problem. In this case the #2 computer is having sound card problems and Jerry, WB9Z, is less familiar with the intricacies of Writelog. I get up periodically to assure that simple things (those that I can do) get done before bothering Marty on the main run station. We lose a few QSOs on # 2, but 15M keeps cranking away. Several times I had to jump into Marty's chair while he trouble-shoots (and resolves) the computer issues with Jerry. Finally, after having a few too many problems with a particular computer sound card, Marty just swaps out a complete computer and sets Writelog back up on the network without skipping a beat. Fantastic! Team selection is only as good as those who are TEAM members willing to work together to complete whatever is needed, whether you want to or not. This was truly a TEAM effort.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #5 Operating**

With our game plan in place, Marty and Jerry ran 15M and 20M to start with, planning to switch over to 40M when 15M died. Jerry "the low band guy" would switch to 40M putting Marty "the run guy" back on the rate radio. Jerry, we later found, could run them just as well, but we knew that Jerry would be our best 40M operator, having had many years of experience working the split band. Jerry kept plugging away at the 40M band through the night while Marty switched over to 80M for some fresh running. By the time I got to sleep it was time to wake up. With my energy level not exactly refreshed by the night 's events, I prepared to run 160M and 80M while NWOL got some well-deserved rest. The total QSOs to this point appeared to be very good. In my head I was thinking, "I can't let the team down." I feel like this thought went through each of our heads several times during the contest. We were committed to each other and to the effort. Our original plans were for 8 hours of run time followed by 4 hours of off time. And for the most part this worked, primarily because Jerry was capable of making it through the tough times both nights. I enjoyed working the low bands, pulling out the weak ones, giving that "little pistol" his contest contact with PJ2. I'm sure I missed a few but, if there was a mouse farting in North Dakota, I was trying to understand his message.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #6 A little bit of Luck**

Daylight brought new and stronger signals. As propagation changed, with daylight we hoped that we would have good signal strength into the states while most of their beams would surely be pointed to the East for the U.S. European opening. While we were able to hear many of the "Big Gun" east coast stations working some EU, we were able to work them fairly easily. We found out later that even East Coast/ EU contacts were difficult and beams

needed to be pointed South to get through to Europe. That meant ALL BEAMS POINT SOUTH! This was the exactly the advantage we needed. Nobody could have predicted what happened that weekend. We were truly in the right place at the right time.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #7 Half time adjustments**

After what seemed to be a great start, we discussed strategy every chance we had during the course of the contest. Marty had looked at prior year's scores and compared to where we were. We hoped, like all contestants, that what we had done during the first day would be good enough to give us a chance to win. Up to this point we were still competing against ourselves, doing our best for each other and ourselves. We had already made more QSOs in the first day than the PJ2T multi-single team had made in the entire ARRL DX CW contest a few weeks earlier! Would there be enough casual operators available in the U.S. to continue the rate? Many questions entered our heads as we began our second day. One thing that kept creeping up was our level of fatigue. I noticed, as I'm sure Marty and Jerry did also, that every time a new operator took over the rate seemed to increase. Was this a change in conditions? No, it was a change in operators. A fresh operator, came in with new enthusiasm, new energy and was able to log more contacts. Because of this, it made sense that we change our plans for day 2. Our 8 hours on and 4 hours off plan worked for the first day, but with fatigue now entering the equation, we needed to adjust the plan to fit our new picture. So after each of us received one more extended 2, 3- or 4-hour rest period, it would be 2 hours ON with 1 hour rest. This provided a fresh operator every 2 hours.

#### **KEY ELEMENT #9 Persistence**

During the course of the second night, rates reached painfully low marks but the boredom and frustration were lightened with words of encouragement from other contestants stopping by for a quick chat. K0XM, K5NZ, K9PG and others stopped by for humorous interactions, which provided encouragement and motivation. It was during this time when Jerry WB9Z mentioned how "plugging away," or successfully enduring these tough times, is often the difference between success and second place. Looking back at it, I can't agree more. This is what makes those top guys the ones to beat. Several times in my young 4 year contesting career I "wished" I had tried a little harder, stayed up a little longer, etc. The difference is in the effort during the tough times, as I experienced first hand while operating next to Jerry. He was a figure of consistency, a

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diesel engine just continuing with the somewhat monotonous task of working one tough station after another. "Kilo Alpha Seven again....", "Kay Ay Seven Whiskey.... what's the last letter?"

"Thanks for hanging in there" "QRZ this is Papa Japan 2 Tango?" In a later discussion we all noted that, we living in the Midwest we are used to digging out the tough ones. Even when times are good we have to do that.

### KEY ELEMENT #10 A push to the finish.

Daylight came again, and with it some renewed enthusiasm. Marty awoke from his rest and after making some calculations wrote a "Post It" note at each computer listing the number of QSO's needed to make it to various benchmarks: 10 Million Points = X QSOs, 12 Million = Y QSOs, 13 Million = Z QSOs. These were good targets, something that I usually do at the Multi-Multi's at my house. Now we could see what it would take, and it became a race to see who would be the operator to turn the point total over to 10 million mark. By now fatigue was almost comical, with each of us struggling at some point to speak the same words over and over again. Many callsigns other than PJ2T were spoken inadvertently, needing correction. Anyone who has been to this level before understands what I'm speaking of. Even with 2 hour operating schedules we struggled. The schedule was working however... Marty's voice was beginning to fail and he considered (after 10 million points were secured) taking an extended time off. However, not giving up on the team, he was back in the chair operating after a short rest. With about an hour left and a brief discussion of beer (Marty offering free beer for those who would join us after the contest), I reached into the refrigerator and opened a couple of Amstels (the local favorite) and placed them in front of Marty and Jerry, just a little more encouragement. Just a few more QSOs and now a new goal: 12,500 QSO's. We had held off moving to 20M because the rates on 10 and 15M remained good. With the move to 20M, the final pileup on an extremely crowded band was incredible. There was no problem working them as fast as we could speak; both 15M and 20M kept us going to the final total of 12,510 QSOs and a score far beyond our original goals but not beyond our ambition. We had, after all, made the effort to assemble a good team, in a good location, with good equipment, good planning, and we operated with persistence and determination. Success comes to those who are prepared when the opportunity arises. I'm sure glad the Propagation Gods shined on PJ2T that weekend.

Thanks to each of you who logged a QSO with us.

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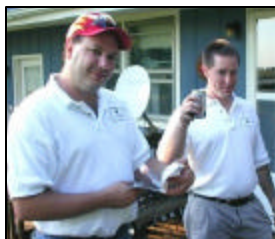
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