

THE BLACK HOLE



ARRL SS Unlimited Team Champs 2000, 2001, 2002

Official Journal of The Society of Midwest Contesters

Volume XV Issue VI

October 2007

Joys of Operating A Modest Ham Station

By Gene Gabry, N9TF

For as long as I have been licensed, since July 20, 1976, as WN9VTF, I have always operated what I have considered just your average run of the mill Ham station. I have always operated with wires, small beams, and an assortment of small verticals. In my 31 years of operating I have never even used an amplifier for HF and have never used more than 100 watts on any band. For some, that might seem like the hard way to operate and make contacts. Well, sometimes the contacts do not come easy, and every now and then there is that Dxpedition that I do not bag. But even those are few. Timing, and most of all, "PAITENCE" is the name of the game when entering the quagmire of big gun stations with long boom beams and a KW filling the ionosphere.

My station today is not to much different from the station I had as a Novice and early General, except I no longer see the light of vacuum tubes glowing in the shack, and I now have all mode operation from 160 meters through 440 Mhz, including 223 Mhz FM. My antenna system is very basic, but my small 35-foot Rohn 25G tower is loaded to capacity up the mast and three different wire dipoles and sloper extending in all directions off the top of the tower.

(Continued on page 5)

Upcoming Contests

432 MHz Fall Sprint	Oct 3
NCCC Sprint, CW	Oct 5
NCCC Sprint, CW	Oct 12
North American Sprint, RTTY	Oct 14
NCCC Sprint, CW	Oct 19
Stew Perry Topband Challenge (Warm up)	Oct 20 - Oct 21
Illinois QSO Party	Oct 21 - Oct 22
NCCC Sprint, CW	Oct 26
CQ Worldwide DX Contest, SSB	Oct 27 to Oct 28
ARRL EME Contest	Oct 27 to Oct 28
ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, CW	Nov 3 - Nov 5
ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, SSB	Nov 17 - Nov 19
CQ Worldwide DX Contest, CW	Nov 24 - Nov 25
ARRL EME Contest	Nov 24 - Nov 25



The hardworking tower at N9TF.

The Black Hole



The **Black Hole** is published monthly, September through June, 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.

EDITOR

Brian Maves, K9QQ

Material for **The Black Hole** should be forwarded to:

k9qq@arrl.net

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:

BOARD

Pat Barkey, N9RV
Jerry Rosalius, WB9Z
Mike Wetzel, W9RE
Scott Neader, KA9FOX
Kevin Kaufold, W9GKA
Sig Markowski, KM9M
Chad Kurszewski, WE9V
Paul Gentry, K9PG
Mark Obermann, AG9A
Ralph Bellas, K9ZO

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Zig Markowski, KM9M

CONTEST ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

Vacant

AWARDS COORDINATOR

Chuck Schneebeil, KI9A

SMC Needs Your Financial Support

As one of the top contest clubs in the nation, we continue to sponsor plaques for a number of major contests including Sweepstakes, ARRL DX, CQWW, and CQWPX, as well as make monetary donations in the interest of promoting radio sporting.

A few years ago we decided to eliminate the 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:

Zig Markowski - KM9M
50 E. Eureka Drive
Lemont, IL 60439-3970

2. Use Paypal and email your donation to dues@w9smc.com.

W9SMC

Official Callsign
of
The Society of Midwest Contesters

SMC Web Page: <http://w9smc.com>

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Zig Markowski, KM9M

CONTEST ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

Vacant

AWARDS COORDINATOR

Chuck Schneebeil, KI9A

SMC Stuff

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



Badges

Order
Today!



Shirts

2007 Sep VHF Recap

By Kevin Kaufhold, W9GKA

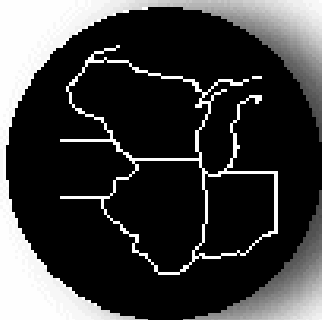
SMC had a good turn-out for this event. The pre-contest warm-up included coordination of activity times from KC9BQA with BC, NLRS and points north of our circle. The contest itself had a 6 meter e-skip opening into 4 and 5 on Saturday night, and some tropo enhancement on Sunday morning that seemed to be aligned N-S. Several people complained of high amounts of noise on 6 and 2 throughout Sunday. I found 222 very refreshing, as the noise was non-existent there, and distances were good on that band. 222 has by far developed into my favorite VHF band to be on.

K2DRH continued with his national trend setting ways, racking up 262K points. How Bob keeps everything maintained and running smoothly, I don't know. I guess that's why he is the undisputed SOLP champion. K9CT continues to build up his SOHP station, and was easily worked on all bands that I have. Craig now has KW's on the 4 VHF bands, a 4 bay array of M2 xxx's on 2 meters at 110 feet, 902 and 1.2G, and who know what else - It truly has been an amazing station development in such a short time!

A real treat for me was working W9FZ in my local grids, as he was moving through the area Sunday, working his way towards reverse VUCC on 6 and 2.

Others that may have participated in the contest included: K9GY, N9VN, AB9H, K9XD, W9SZ, AA9DY, K9KL up north, WB9BZK with another rover run in northern Illinois, K9ILT, N9LAH, KB9WQJ, K9IJ, and KC9BLP. I hope I didn't forget anyone. Sean, KX9X even helped out when the robot didn't know what time the contest started. Jerry, WB9Z, sent in his regards from an HF DX pedition he was on. All in all, it was a nice time.

On this year's June contest, our logs are in good shape, and no other club is anywhere near the 50 op level. So, let keep our fingers crossed. Things look pretty good right now for the unlimited.



Modest Station Contesting

By Mel Crichton, KJ9C

Most anybody would say that my station borders on modest, yet I have managed to place in top ten US in a few contests using 100 watts from this modest station.

Of course the key to success is not so much what equipment is in the shack but two other things:

1. The antennas and
2. The operator

As for the second item, I am not the caliber of operator as W9RE, N4TZ, W9IU, N9RV or other locals and ex-locals.... but with lots of aspirin and lots of beer I have managed to stay in the chair for the duration of the contest



and to optimize use of band openings with just one radio (no SO2R here)... OK, I do keep a coffee can near the operating desk in case I have a run going.... the key here is perseverance, and a desire to beat my perennial low power competition N4TZ and WT9U... most times they win, but sometimes.....

The antennas are key, and here everybody laughs at me. I have no tower but a 9 foot Glen Martin on the roof of a single story ranch style home (see photo). It's all painted tree bark brown to blend in. Most neighbors don't know I have ANY antennas unless they come up to the house. The feed point of the single 2 element tri-band quad is up maybe 16 feet above ground. The house sits atop a 40 foot hill of sand/gravel (providing almost no ground at all), but it's the only hill in my part of Indy. Managed a couple first place single band DX contest LP wins with this antenna, and before I had the tower I hung the quad from an oak tree maybe ten feet off the ground and placed in top ten all band LP CW in another DX contest. The key there was... I had to drop it to the ground to rotate it, so I rotated it only twice a day.... once in the morning for Europe, once in the after-

(Continued on page 6)

SMC at W9DXCC

Pictures courtesy of K9PG



K9UIY & XYL Jan, N9US, N9CO



K9GS, W9RN, N9AU, AA4HP and his wife K4MVO



K9EU, K9TF, AI9L



KE9I and KE9S ... one dit off.



WB9Z, N9AU, W9MU and others



K9JK and NN1N

(Continued from page 1)

A brief description of the aluminum on the tower mast from bottom up starts with a Cushcraft MA5B HF mini beam at about 37', 224WB Cushcraft 222Mhz beam, A50-3S Cushcraft 6 meter beam, Cushcraft 13B2 144Mhz, Cushcraft 719B 432, and finally, a Comet CX333 triband VHF/UHF vertical at the top. All of this is in a compact space of 10 feet of mast above the tower. Since I live on a small lot where the homes are close together, it is difficult to stretch wires very far; so all of my low frequency wires are the Alpha Delta shortened dipoles and sloper. I have a DX-B, 30-160 meters sloping to the ENE at an apex of 35', a DX-DD 80/40 dipole that I added 20 and 30 meters to as well NE/SW, and a DX-LB for 160/80/40, NW/SE, also at 35' apex drooping to about 20'.

Inside the shack I have two Kenwood TS-2000, one dedicated for VHF, the other dedicated for HF, an Alinco DR-235 223 Mhz FM and a FT-8100 dual bander.



Gene worked 3B7C on 4 bands CW, 20, 30, 40, and 80 meters, with only 100 watts. He came close on 160. They heard him, and kept getting N9TU???, but couldn't get the last dit of the F. They finally moved on after several attempts. He is just happy they were even able to hear any signal from me at all on 160.

This station, although very modest, is no sleeper. As I mentioned earlier, timing and patience are the key to performing, whether in a contest or a DX pile up, and, choosing the proper category of a contest to enter is also important if you are trying to collect wall paper, or even a plaque or two. I currently have two plaques hanging on the wall. One is from the ARRL RTTY Roundup, 2006 Multioperator Low Power Central Division, and 1st place USA Single-Op QRP in the 2004 CQWW VHF. The CQWW VHF was totally planned and calculated. I had looked up past scores for that category, and had a good feeling I could beat the prior years USA score, and did. As for the RTTY Roundup, I bet that there would not be very many entrants in the low power multi-op category, figuring most would be entering as high power, so I felt I had a chance of placing pretty high, and did.

As for contest goals, I keep them simple and realistic. Mostly I just set out to do a personal best compared to the previous contest. I do get a bit more competitive though in the VHF and UHF contests, as I feel I have almost as good a chance as most anyone in placing high, by picking the right category.

For HF contests, my goals might be to work WAS on a particular band, DXCC, or just grab some new band mode DX for the challenge award or 5BDXCC.

Ultimately, I know my score will be of some positive contribution to the SMC effort! Sometimes that's all the motivation I need.

My favorite HF band to contest on has been 160 meters. Even though I am antenna challenged there, I have the most fun. Even though I only have 15 all time DX, and, finally WAS (CW), I find the challenge very rewarding when I work a new country with low power and small low antennas. My favorite memory of playing in one of my first contests on 160 came in the 1999 CQWW 160CW contest. All I had for HF antennas at the time was an R5 vertical on a 20' pole along side the house, and a 40-meter dipole at 20 feet. I had troubles loading the 40-meter dipole with the little MFJ tuner, but for some reason, I was able to load the R5 through the tuner as long as I kept the power from the TS-570 down to no more than 50 watts. I worked 33 states that night including KH6CC and KH7R off of the R5 vertical. That was the moment I became hooked on 160!

I am also an avid DX chaser, currently sitting at 324 worked mixed and 321 confirmed. This is where real patience, listening and timing become important. And sometimes, you just got to get up, walk away, and wait for a better day! The thrill of the adventure is how you journey through it. Once your there, the adventure is over. Well, I guess that's one way to express the motivation of a modest station.

(Continued from page 3)

noon for JA... North and South America were covered by a 20 meter dipole at 40 feet. No time lost waiting for the antenna to come around.

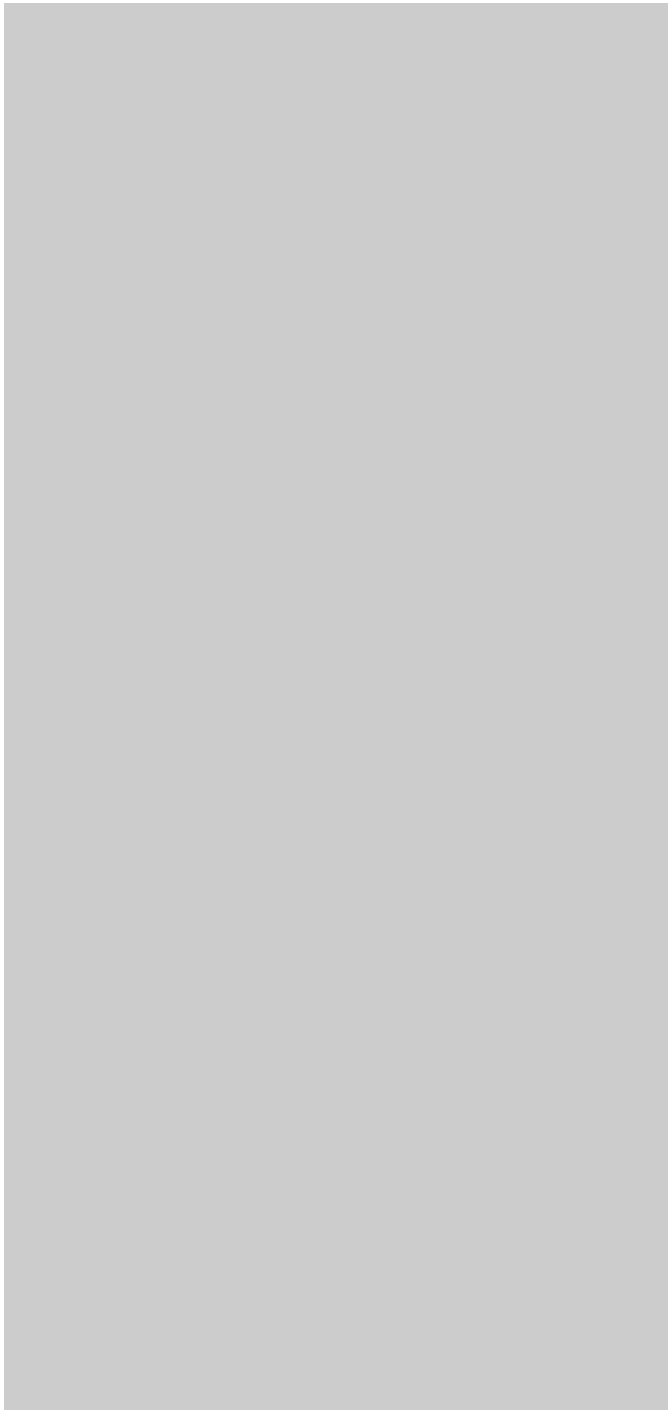


The rest of the 2.3 acres is all trees, but they are TALL.... the 160 inverted el is a wire running maybe 90 feet vertically and then laying on tree tops for the remaining 35 feet. It has 6 elevated (6-10 foot high) radials and does OK.....I receive with slinky beverage and a K9AY loop..... but check out the Stew Perry results.... not bad for a crummy station in the Black Hole

Higher band antennas are not much better.... an 80 meter dipole that's almost an inverted vee, with feed point at 60 feet. A 40/30/20 dipole at 55 feet. All in the trees, where many experts argue that signals won't get out. But even

though I suffer somewhat and lose in the pileups to the East Coast Wall on 40 and 80 in the DX tests, these antennas make their share of contacts. Got LOTS of first place IN or first place 9th district certificates with these modest antennas.

Lately, though, the body is not capable of contesting for more than a few hours, so it has been state QSO parties as a mobile. That's an even MORE modest station setup! But it's fun!



SMC Stuff

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**

Visit his full color web page to see other items you can get with the SMC Logo:

www.thesignman.com/color/



KC9FD

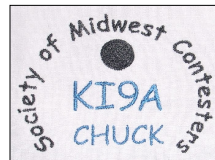
SOCIETY OF MIDWEST

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

Midwest Engraving
6657 N. Sidney Place
Glendale, WI 53209

Ph: 414-228-8654
Fax: 414-228-8655

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



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@swbell.net (Al) or N0UXQ@swbell.net (Sandy)



Illinois QSO Party 2007

1700Z October 21 to 0100Z October 22

Get full information and rules at the Western IL ARC

<http://www.w9awe.org/ILQP2007.html>

Member/New Member Information/ Update Form

Name: _____

Call: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please send updates to:

Zig Markowski - KM9M
50 E. Eureka Drive
Lemont, IL 60439-3970

We need your input for the next 'Hole!!

- ⇒ **Operating stories**
- ⇒ **Station construction**
- ⇒ **Operating accessories**
- ⇒ **Packet and computer hints**
- ⇒ **Product reviews**
- ⇒ **Plug your upcoming DXpedition**
- ⇒ **Your idea here**

**Please consider putting an article
together today!**



The Society of Midwest Contesters

Brian Maves, K9QQ
1322 Engle Creek Dr.
O'Fallon, IL 62269

FIRST CLASS MAIL