

THE BLACK HOLE

Volume 5 Issue 1

The Official Journal of the Society of Midwest Contesters

September 1989 - February 1990

DXCC MOBILE

George Zurbuchen, K9CC

When I originally installed an HF mobile rig in my car I was only looking for a way to make a three hour per day commute more tolerable. I never imagined that 2 1/2 years later I would have worked 129 countries mobile! Much of the country total was worked on 40 and 20 meters before the current surge in sunspot numbers. DX worked on 40 meters includes Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands, as well as all continents. In addition, I have added twelve new countries to my 200 plus all time country total, and I am still driving to and from work! I believe anyone so motivated can accomplish the same thing.

I have been a ham for 36 years, but I never worked DX until 1987 because I assumed nothing of a "competitive" DX could be accomplished with such a "weak signal". My rig consists of a Kenwood TS-440S/AT running 100 watts with a Hustler MO-2 bumper mount antenna. The antenna is connected to a VP-1 adapter at the top allowing three resonators to be attached at the same time. This allows operation on any one of the three bands without leaving the driver's seat. All operating has been done with three resonators attached. Various resonator combinations have been used with no apparent differences in signal strength, therefore eliminating the possibility that I had found some "magic combination". The built in automatic antenna tuner available in the TS-440 and other rigs is a worthwhile option when operating mobile due to the narrow bandwidth of the antennas, especially on the lower frequencies.

Most operating has been done on CW but equally good results have been realized on SSB. I have just always preferred CW. For those of you who think sending CW while driving is too difficult, I suggest you try it. You will probably be pleasantly surprised. The arrangement I use is a Vibroplex Brass Racer self contained keyer attached to a piece of finished plywood. The plywood is laid over the center console of my 1984 Citation. The keyer is attached to the plywood with rubber bands. As you get comfortable with keying while driving you can get into advanced techniques such as: timing your spaces between charac-

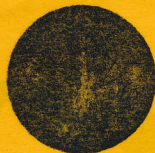
ters to coincide with the bumps on a bumpy road, or sending while rolling up your window after paying a toll by steering with your leg (no turning allowed). All CW operating is done with full break-in, which allows one to hear what is happening on the receive frequency at all times even while sending. This is a major advantage available on CW only. Like my friend Mike, N9AEJ says, "There are only two kinds of CW operators; those who use full break-in, and those who should".

A few words about the Vibroplex Brass Racer keyer. I like the keying action very much and it makes a nice compact unit to use in a car, but there are a few problems with it. A major problem is that the keying speed control is hypersensitive. It takes a very steady hand to QRQ from 15 WPM to 20 WPM without jumping to 35 WPM! Also, when first using the keyer after the car has been closed up in the summer sun you have to remember to adjust the keying speed back down to a normal level until the keyer cools off. This temperature sensitivity problem would probably exist with any keyer and it is not serious. Since the keyer does not have an on/off switch you also learn not to have anything laying against the paddles when you go off the air. To do so results in the keyer dah or dit-ing it's self contained battery to an early grave. Again, not a serious problem and personally, I think an on/off switch is not required.

Would a KW amplifier be worthwhile? While I work most of what I hear, I'm sure a KW would help to work DX. However, the biggest problem is *hearing* the DX. It is quite common for the DX station to give a better report than I give him or her. Therefore, I think a KW would be more useful in 75 meter ragchewing (they hear you but they don't want to talk to you unless you are loud).

Although I have written mostly about working DX, I have done plenty of rag chewing on CW and SSB, and general short wave listening. A couple of humorous stories resulted from my monitoring CB Channel 19. One morning as I was passing a truck I heard, "Go-ooo-olly, a little four wheeler just went by me with an antenna like a sputnik". Another morning I was listening to two truckers discussing several "smokies" and how they must be going to a special meeting since one was driving an unmarked car and they all got off at the same exit. I passed the rearmost truck just before exiting the Interstate. The trucker warned his buddy that one of those FCC monitor-

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Membership in the Society of Midwest Contesters is open to all persons with a bona fide interest in amateur radio contesting. Dues are \$5.00 per year. For more information, write to the above address or contact one of the following officers:

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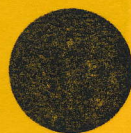
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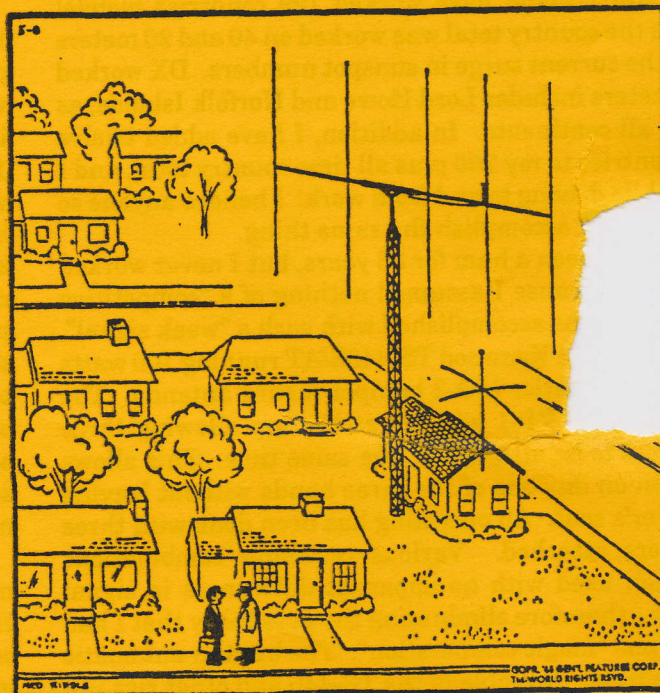
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Please allow a couple of weeks for delivery.

MR. TWEEDY

By Ned Riddle



"I'm looking for a Mr. Cole. All I know is that he lives around here somewhere and operates a ham radio."

Articles and score rumors are needed for *The Black Hole*. I can accept material in the following formats (listed in preferred order):

1. Macintosh 3.5" disk
2. Apple II 3.5" or 5.25" disk
3. IBM 3.5" or 5.25" disk
4. Packet (when it's working correctly)
5. Hard copy (must be **DARK**, NLQ type for the scanner to read it correctly.) *Note: Due to a shortage of time on behalf of the editor, I cannot guarantee publication of hand-written copy. Please type it if possible!!!*

The SMC annual Awards Banquet was a big success and everyone enjoyed themselves. Thanks to Dave, WOØG and Scott, KE9NB, for handling the details, especially considering the last minute change in location. SMC Contest Achievement Awards were handed out, along with a new award, the "Anti-Gravity Award". These were presented to Lew Gordon, K4VX, and Glen Rantala, WA1UJU. Dave will explain his concept for these awards in a future issue, along with the criteria used to select the recipients.

The SMC continues to grow, and we have had a number of suggestions concerning the future directions of the club. One thing that is inevitable is an increase in dues. If we have to pay to have the newsletter printed, the dues will be a minimum of about \$12/year. Most other clubs are in the \$15 range. Next year the US Snail Service wants to raise rates by 20%, which will increase the dues and no doubt further erode the service. Stay tuned.

The Yankee Clipper Contest Club publishes an annual Contest Cookbook before the CQ World Wars which presents articles on strategy for the upcoming contests. Should the SMC try something like this, above and beyond the newsletter?

An interesting suggestion has been made that the SMC take over the administration of the Illinois QSO Party. That would be a fair amount of work, as can be attested to by SMC'er K9KR, who handles the Wisconsin QSO Party. Someone will have to step forward and volunteer to investigate this.

of the Wisconsin QSO Party, I am enclosed a summary sheet. Try to get on and work. This is one of the finest QSO Parties in the only 7 hours.

O Parties are as active as ours. A couple on for the Vermont and New Hampshire hour period, I only managed to find 2 VT stations! No wonder people think VT is rare. I had greater hopes for the NH test. After all, some of the finest contesters in the world reside in that fair state. Believe me, none of them were on for their QSO Party. I made 15 Q's in 2 days, and most were multi-band/multi-mode contacts with club stations. Since propagation was pretty good, and all of them were loud, I have to believe there just weren't that many on. Those who were seemed to want to ragchew - each contact seemed to last about 5 minutes! There were pileups on the NH stations, but the NH ops didn't care - they wanted to talk about their snowstorm in progress, etc. I heard one club station and his contactee exchange "73" eleven times on CW! Sheesh...

I wonder if those of you who receive the *NCJ* have noted some of the subtle changes since the ARRL took over publishing duties. I received a letter from Richard, K5NA, stating that their OMARC Spring Midnight Special results were bumped in favor of advertising. Well, money talks, and it takes money to publish the *NCJ*. But, since the former publishers managed on just the subscriptions (and the sweat off their backs), and the League has

attracted the big buck advertisers without lowering the subscription rate, they must be doing OK enough to give priority to contest oriented issues - especially something as small as the OMARC results.

I also noted that *QST* again has offloaded the VHF Spring Sprint results to the *NCJ*, with a subhead stating "Pickings were slim this year!" I can't help but wonder if the "slim pickings" are in part a result of *QST* not publishing the results for the past few years. Now, it would be nice if all contesters subscribed to the *NCJ*, but they don't, especially VHF'ers. Why should a VHF'er enter a contest sponsored by *QST* if, as far as he knows, the results never get published?

Since the *NCJ* went to third class mailing, it is always several weeks late. The November/December issue arrived after Phone SS weekend, which was a great time to read W9XT's column of SS hints. Gary made some comments regarding this in his column, and it was edited out! The *NCJ* has always been a provocative forum for contesters to make their feelings known, pro and con, and we all know how well the League has treated contesters in recent years - yet, when was the last time you read a negative comment regarding the ARRL contest policy in the *NCJ*? I find it hard to believe that they only receive praise. I don't know about you, but I'm getting tired of yet another letter on uniques...

One thing I will get together after the newsletter is done is the designs for the SMC T-shirts, as drawn by WG9L and presented at Dayton last year. Bob is still willing to handle everything, and several people have expressed interest in getting shirts *before* Dayton. Look for information in the next *Hole*...

I received a copy of a publication called *Digital Digest*. If you're into any of the digital modes, this is one to have. It's very well done. Contact them at 4063 N. Goldenrod Road, Winter Park, FL 32792.

By now you probably noticed that the cartoon on page 2 apparently features a vertically polarized CB beam and a CB ground plane. After all these years we still haven't managed to inform the public of the difference between ham radio and CB. And, sometimes, as contesters, we seem to place ourselves above all that. Such aloofness to common misconceptions may come back to haunt us. Witness the current debate in Pueblo West, Colorado, where all 12 amateurs have been ordered to remove all amateur antennas and equipment from their property. They cannot even store amateur equipment in their homes. CB and TVRO antennas and equipment are ok, of course! This story, which came from the W5YI report and Westlink, needless to say, bears watching. Sort of reminds me of that Chicago suburb that banned pickup trucks. People sure can get weird attitudes about things they don't understand...

It's been a long soapbox, but it's my last one. Thanks for your support. It's been a slice...

UPCOMING CONTESTS

The best source of information on most contest activities is K1AR's **Contest Calendar** in *CQ Magazine*..

Feb. 17-18 **ARRL DX CW Contest**
 Feb. 23-25 **CQ WW 160 Meter SSB Contest**
 Feb. 24-25 UBA SSB Contest
 Feb. 24-26 Maine QSO Party
 Feb. 24-26 YL/OM CW Contest
 Mar. 3-4 **ARRL DX SSB Contest**
 Mar. 9-11 Japan Int'l CW DX Contest
 Mar. 10-11 QCWA SSB Party
 Mar. 10-11 Commonwealth Contest
 Mar. 10-11 Wisconsin QSO Party
 Mar. 17 YLRL East Meets West SSB Contest
 Mar. 17-18 BARTG Spring RTTY Contest
 Mar. 17-18 Bermuda Contest
 Mar. 24-25 YL-ISSB YL/OM SSB Contest
 Mar. 24-25 **CQ WPX SSB Contest**
 Apr. 11-13 YLRL DX-YL to NA-YL CW
 Apr. 18-20 YLRL DX-YL to NA-YL SSB
 Apr. 28-29 Swiss Helvetia Contest

BOLD TYPE = SMC CLUB EFFORT!

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September 1989 - February 1990
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