



PVRC Newsletter March 2012

Presidents Letter – Rich NN3W

Happy Leap Day everyone!

With the transition of February into March, we are now approximately half way through the “Spring” contest season. The RTTY WPX yielded some amazing scores from the club as did the ARRL DX CW test – even though our friend “Sol” decided to take a minor snooze and brought us sunspot number levels that were less than expected. Nonetheless, two of our flagship stations – W3LPL and NR4M (staffed fully by PVRicers) – rose to the top of the heap and posted amazing scores in the hotly contested multi-multi category. Finally, the CQWW 160 SSB test yielded challenging conditions, replete with thunderstorm static that is not characteristic of the month of February.

Coming up, are three major DX contests which should grab everybody’s interest – ARRL DX SSB, Russia DX, and the WPX SSB test. The Russia DX contest is especially challenging given that your score is affected by not only your scoring and accuracy, but also the accuracy of those that you work. Score reductions can be brutal, so be sure that everyone gets your exchange correct!

As I was writing this, I was casually working the CQWW 160 SSB test – one which I usually avoid owing to the fact that my current 160 meter antenna arrangement is slightly better than useless. With my VFO parked above 1.925 MHz, I came across W3DQ. Trouble is, it’s not W3DQ’s voice. Instead, as I find out, it’s Paul N8HM who is busily and happily operating as W3DQ and is giving out DC to the deserving. He’s got quite the pileup and appears to be enjoying himself immensely (I won’t get into the DC as a “multiplier” issue in this month’s column...).

It seems to me that with so many big contests coming up, there is ample opportunity to open up your stations and chairs for newer and younger operators that will serve as tomorrow’s band captains, club officers, and call area leaders! If you are contemplating

not going full out or don't want to commit to a major single effort, consider hosting a multi-op effort or allowing a guest op to take a chair for portions of the contest. They'll get valuable chair time, experience operating in a major DX contest environment, and most of all, they will have fun. Just ask N8HM.

Anyhow, regardless of how many hours you operate or how large your score is in the March events, please do remember to have fun. May your claimed scores involve QSO tallies that are four digits in number and a score that is at least seven digits!

73, Rich DiDonna NN3W

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The Other (Competitive) Side of KH6IJ – Bill W7GKF

I read with interest Nose's (KH6IJ) contest secrets in the recent PVRC newsletter. I have an additional "secret" that he passed on to me in the early 60's.

From 1961 to 1966, I was a PhD student in chemistry at the University of Hawaii Manoa campus. My call was KH6FIF, and I was very active in contests. I had a TA-33 on a small tower high up on Wilhelmina Rise in the Kaimuki district of Honolulu. At that time, Nose was a Physics instructor in the building next to mine, and we would often have lunch together. I learned a lot at those lunches.

My favorite contest was SS CW in November, and I could always count on Nose being in the fray with me. Yes, he was a very good operator, as most people know. But I never considered him unbeatable. He had a lot experience, lots of technique, and the golden short and easily recognizable call of KH6IJ. On the other hand, I had a better QTH for signal launch to the mainland, and was younger (I figured that he needed sleep more than I did). But, I also had a much less recognizable call and could not memorize the 10 call signs that were calling me at that instant, like he could.

Well, one year I got off to a very good start in the SS contest. I had a great run going for the first few hours. Then I checked on Nose's current serial number and was elated to find out that we were about neck and neck. I redoubled my efforts and ran for another hour before switching bands. I didn't hear him for another hour or so, but when I did I was happy to find out that I was a few QSO's ahead of him. Of course, both he and I

were "keeping an eye" on each other, but **not** working each other so as not to formally show our current QSO number status to each other.

I was on top of the world. Besides Nose and myself, there were currently only one or two other KH6's who were CW testers, and they were not in the money this time. Finally, Nose called me on 15 meters. I gave him my serial number and waited expectantly for his lower number. To my surprise, what came back was a QSO serial number about 20 greater than mine. I wished him luck, then started to choke. I could not send CW for about 5 minutes, and began taking large gulps of water in order to rehydrate myself. When I got my composure back, I started up, but at about 90% efficiency. I was sick to my stomach and began to convince myself that second place was really not so bad. At the end of the contest I heard Nose giving out serial numbers that were about 70 greater than mine.

The following Monday we had our usual lunch in Nose's office. After preliminary comments about current U.of H. students, and the number of Chemistry majors vs. Physics majors, I decided to break the post-contest ice. I congratulated him on doing such a good job in the contest. I then admitted to him that his relatively high number in our contest QSO had broken my back as far and my competitive drive in the contest.

Nose didn't say anything for several minutes, but then looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes. I can still remember his words: "Bill, you know there is no rule that says you have to give sequential numbers. As long as you give a unique number for each QSO, it doesn't matter if they are in order."

So, he had conned me good. He had used the perfect psychological trick, and just at the right time. He knew when to call me, and what number to give me. I didn't bother to listen to his QSO's immediately after our QSO, because by that time I was totally devastated.

Just thought you would like to hear another side of KH6IJ.

73, Bill, W7GKF



Breaking Through Pileups – Jim N3JT

To follow up on previous month's discussions on maximizing rate and maximizing multipliers, I asked Jim N3JT to refresh a piece he had written for February 1990 "PVRC Contest Cookbook" I pulled together back in my last stint as newsletter editor. Jim has great advice for quickly getting in and out of a pileup – John K3TN

I have been on a number of DXpeditions over the years, working as many as 5,000 stations in one weekend on CW. From the vantage point of the operator at the DX location, certain operating practices, good and bad, seem to stand out. You probably know about most of these, but many DX callers seemingly do not!

The purported goal of a caller in a pileup is to attract the attention of the DX station and make a contact - ahead of everyone else, hopefully. Why, then, do so many operators call the DX station on his transmit frequency when he is plainly listening somewhere else? Yes, everyone makes mistakes. Even the best among us has at one time or another inadvertently hit the wrong button on the rig and called on the DX station's transmit frequency. To avoid this embarrassing error and not be considered a lobotomy gone bad, take the two seconds needed to check your VFO settings before calling. If you don't, others surely will tell you and that's bad publicity for you!

One of the best ways to quickly bust a pileup - used by those who consistently seem to work through large pileups with very modest equipment - is to determine exactly how the DX station is selecting his callers. Whatever you might think, be assured it is not always the strongest signal that makes it through a pileup, especially if the pileup is large. More than five stations on the same frequency cannot be separated on CW by the DX station, particularly if the DX station is working them at 180 or more an hour and is listening only a few seconds for each new callsign.

The answer, of course, is to call away from what we might call the locus, the point where all guys seem to be calling. This means calling a little up or down. If the pileup is wide, try the edges, or listen for a hole among the callers. If the DX station is listening up or down, find the last station he worked and call just above or below that spot. Even for the DX station that hops around, there is a pattern of some kind that can be used to increase your calling chances.

Determine the DX operator's rhythm. If you let up on the key, and hear him already answering somebody else, send faster. If he answers a half beat after you let up on the key (or mic), talk more slowly or leave a pause before you send your call. Sometimes it means dumping your call in slowly just after that critical time when the majority of other callers have paused to breathe or listen.

If the DX station is working at a high rate, you can be sure that he is very capable of picking out callsigns from the mass of callers, which means he is good at copying callsigns given just once. So don't call longer than necessary. Find the rhythm. Most contest DXpeditions are run by pretty good operators. Have good audio on SSB, clear phonetics, clean CW, use a little clever strategy and you will have improved the odds of working them sooner rather than later.

SH5 Log Analysis Software – Howie N4AF

For those wanting a little something extra in post-contest log analysis, SH5 may prove useful. It produces a lot of graphical analysis including:

- Rates by time and band
- Countries by time and band
- Qs per station
- Passed QSOs
- Dupes
- Second Radio Qs
- Possible errors
- Contacts by beam heading, etc.

It also outputs KML files that allow you to display all of your QSOs on a Google Earth map of the world. A demo of its output is available [here](#).

It may be downloaded from <http://tr4w.com/sh5> You will need a registered copy (\$20) to run it against a log of over 200 QSOs.

Making Best Use of The RBN in DX Contests - Pete N4ZR

If you're planning to operate Assisted or Multi-op in DX contests, let me offer a few thoughts to help you make best use of spots from the Reverse Beacon Network.

1. Use a node that allows you to include or exclude Skimmer spots with a simple command. Both ARClusterV6 and VE7CC Cluster nodes have this capability. Some logging programs and Telnet clients may also have this built in.
2. If you use the RBN and your logging software lets you set a packet time-out value, set it for no longer than 10 minutes to cut down on the number "stale" spots. The skimmer software automatically re-spots stations that continue CQing on the same frequency only once every 10 minutes, but typically such re-spots appear within a few seconds of the 10-minute threshold, since we now have pretty wide coverage.
3. By all means *do* use filtering of some sort to limit the number of Skimmer spots you receive. For example, if you filter by geographic origin of spots, you can pretty much assure yourself that you'll be able to hear everything that is spotted. ARCluster version 6 also has the ability to set a threshold and not pass you a spot until at least "x" Skimmers worldwide have concurred. This can materially help you to reduce busted spots.
4. Be skeptical of spots that appear on your bandmap on the very same frequency as someone who has already been spotted there. Despite all the care VE3NEA has taken to prevent it, stations that call more than once, very close to the running station's frequency and CW speed, may be mistaken for runners and spotted by a Skimmer. As you can imagine, this may be particularly common on the low bands.

Mo' Mults! ARRL to Split ON into Four Sections

Looks like working VE3s in ARRL contests will get a bit more exciting: Full info [here](#):

On February 6, Radio Amateurs of Canada (**RAC**) issued a **statement on their website** that the Ontario Section would be split into four new RAC Administrative Sections, effective September 1, 2012. The reason given for the restructure was "...to create a management model that better communicates with, and represents the interests of, the overall Ontario Amateur population." The Ontario Section will be dissolved and be replaced with four new RAC Sections: Ontario North, Ontario South, Ontario East and the Greater Toronto Area. The new section abbreviations will be announced when final. This new change will affect ARRL contests and Field Day in the following ways:

- For ARRL contests that use ARRL/RAC sections as multipliers -- the ARRL November Sweepstakes and the ARRL 160 Meter Contest -- there will be an overall increase of three available multipliers.
- ARRL contests that use US states and Canadian provinces as multipliers -- the ARRL RTTY Roundup, the ARRL International DX Contest and the ARRL 10 Meter Contest -- are unaffected by this change. ARRL VHF+ contests and the IARU HF Championships are also unaffected by this change.
- The first contest to be affected by the RAC administrative change will be the 2012 ARRL November Sweepstakes, which will now require 83 multipliers to achieve a Clean Sweep.
- ARRL Field Day does not use multipliers, but Ontario stations will send new Section abbreviations as part of their exchanges.

Contester Jim George N3BB Writes a Novel – John K3TN

From Jim N3BB:

"Many of you are aware of the fact that I've been writing since my retirement. It has been quite a journey, and I've taken it seriously. The result is a 301 page novel ('Reunion') that I think you will find interesting and well written. Although ham radio is not the primary theme of the story, it is treated with the magic that captured the imagination of many of us as teenagers. I know this aspect of the story will bring back many fond memories of your early fascination with the hobby."

Jim's book is published by AuthorHouse, in Bloomington, IN, and is available now at all Internet retailers, including AuthorHouse, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble. I was able to buy the eKindle version for a Kindle-ed friend, only \$1.99.

Rusian DX Contest March 18th: Unlimited Club Entries – Howie N4AF

For the RUDXC on March 18th, there is no club "circle" limiting club entries. Regardless of where you are, get on and mark your logs **PVRC**. Contest rules and details are [here](#).

Whiskey November 3 Rack – Dick WN3R



On the right is the D-Star Hot Spot (446.000) and Winlink (145.77) gear in a rack with a dedicated computer for each. On the left is the WA3KOK repeater with the UPS setting on top. The entire affair is backed up with the whole house 25KW generator.

Member Classified Ads

A pair of Force-12 Sigma 40 half-wave vertical dipoles. Up only a year before I finished installing client's tower w/a 40M Yagi. \$700 for the pair of them.

Full details on the antenna can be found [here](#). - Don Daso – K4ZA@juno.com, or ad copy below.

Welcome New Members – W3LL

Please welcome the following new members who were voted into PVRC during the months of February:

- In the North Carolina East Chapter, Tony K4QE
- In the Northwest Chapter, Jim AB3CV

Upcoming Contests and Log Due Dates

Contests This Month

- Mar 3 – ARRL DX SSB
- Mar 11 – NA Spring RTTY
- Mar 17 - BARTG RTTY
- Mar 17 – Russian DX
- Mar 17 – VA QSO Party
- Mar 24 – CQ WPX SSB

Logs Due This Month

- Mar 1 – CQ WPX RTTY
- Mar 12 – PACC

See WA7BNM's [Contest Calendar](#) for more detail and the latest information.

The Editor's Last Word – John K3TN

As I write this I just finished having a blast in the ARRL DX CW test. The Sprints are my favorite contests (thanks to Brian N3OC for letting me guest op for the recent February CW Sprint) but after all those domestic contests recently, it sure is fun to play in a DX contest. I used the Reverse Beacon Network in a part time Unlimited effort. I think the RBN will require us to create a new name for what is not running but sure isn't search and pounce. With 500W and a wire I could easily maintain 100+ rates for several hours – the limit was my concentration and ability, not bigger stations squeezing my run frequency or flat out stealing it. While nothing replaces the thrill of running, this came awfully close.

I've been including a "tutorial" each month, where we take advantage of PVRC members' expertise in various aspects of contesting. There are still a lot of strategy areas we haven't yet touched, and everyone has some "secrets" that are worth sharing - specially as we see a lot of new contesters joining PVRC. I'll throw out solicitations for more input onto the PVRC reflector – please share your thoughts.

This month we add a new advertiser to the newsletter: Jeff K1NSS and his bizarro "Lucky Contest Mugs" as seen on his Dashtoons site [here](#). Thanks to Bill W7GKF, Jim N3JT, Pete N4ZR and Howie N4AF for submissions for this month's newsletter. If you have any post-contest write-ups, amusing anecdotes or humor in uniform, drop me a line [here](#).

– 73 John K3TN

Eyeball QSO Directions

The latest info on local club meetings and get together will always be sent out on the [PVRC reflector](#) and posted on the PVRC [web site](#).

NW Region:

Meetings are generally held on the third Tuesday of each month at the City Buffet, 1306 W. Patrick Street, Frederick, MD. (301) 360-9666. It's in a small shopping center. Most arrive about 6 PM for dinner and informal discussions. The meeting begins at 7:00 PM.

From W. Patrick Street, turn up McCain Dr. (the Mountain View Diner is on the corner), then turn right into the shopping center, then turn left and search for a parking place. The City Buffet is tucked back in the left corner of the shopping center behind the Mountain View Diner. You can't see the City Buffet from W. Patrick Street.

Contact: Jim [WX3B](#)

Central Region

Meets monthly the second Monday of each month, except June, July & August). The location alternates between the below MD and VA locations. Pre-meeting dinners start at 6:00 pm and meetings start at 7:30 pm.

VA LOCATION: Anita's, 521 E. Maple Ave, Vienna, VA. Tel: 703-255-1001. Meets at this location during the months of February, April and October.

Contact: Rich [NN3W](#)

MD LOCATION: Max's Café. 2319 University Blvd W, Wheaton MD 20902. Tel: 301-949-6297
People usually begin arriving at the restaurant around 6:30. Meets at this location during the months of January, March, May, September and November.

Contact: Art [K3KU](#)

The Laurel, MD Region: Bill N3XL

The PVRC get together is held at the first LARC meeting each quarter at the clubhouse.

The Annapolis Crew : Dan K2YWE

Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Broadneck Grill in Annapolis. We gather at about 5:30 PM and order dinner about 6. We break up usually before 8 PM. E-Mail [K2YWE](#) to be put on the e-mail reminder list.

PVRC-NC

The PVRC NC-East chapter meetings are held at [Manchester's Bar and Grill](#) on the 9100 block of Leesville Rd. in North Raleigh, with "QRM" beginning at 6:00pm and the dinner meeting following shortly thereafter. The meeting is held monthly on the 1st Thursday of most months, cancellations or changes usually announced on the [PVRC-NC website](#).

[The PVRC NC-West Chapter](#) holds its meetings on the 4th Monday of each month at [the Mellow Mushroom](#), 314 W. 4th St., Winston-Salem, NC. Ragchew at 7:00pm, dinner meeting starts at 7:30pm. All contesters and interested guests are invited!

Central Virginia Contest Club: Ed NW4V

Meets the first Tuesday of the month at St. Martins Church, 9000 St. Martin Lane, Richmond VA, (between W. Broad St. and N. Parham Road). Our meeting begins at 7PM.

Over the Hill Bunch:

The group meets for lunch at noon alternately in Maryland at the College PARK Holiday Hotel Route 1 and the Beltway or in Virginia at the Parkview Marriot near route 50 and the Beltway. Meetings generally are held on the last Wednesday of the month and are subject to change. Meetings are announced by E-Mail.

All PVRC members, non-members interested in membership and guests are welcome. For information contact Roger Stephens, K5VRX, 703-658-3991 for Virginia meetings; or Cliff Bedore [W3CB](#) or get on 147.00 for Maryland meetings.

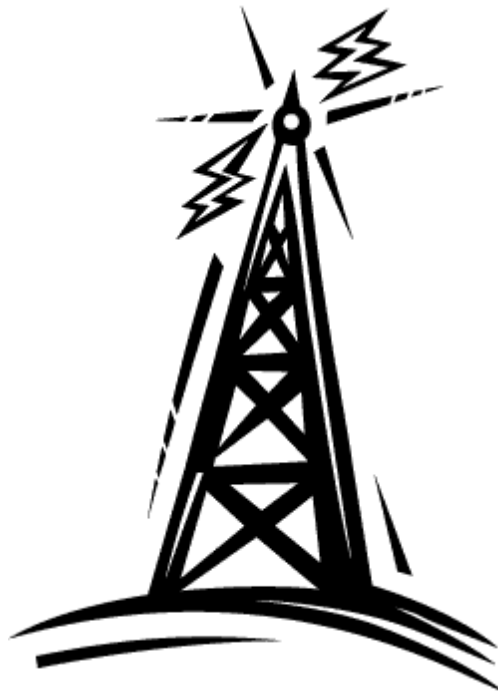
Downtown Lunch Group

Meets on the 3rd Wednesday or Thursday of the month in the downtown area of Washington, DC. Locations occasionally change, but are always Metro accessible. Details are sent out on the PVRC reflector. Feel free to contact Eric W3DQ or Brian WV4V for details and directions.

Southwest VA Chapter:

The Southwest VA group meets each Wednesday at about 8:30 AM at Hardees at 20265 Timberlake Road in Lynchburg, VA. This is an informal gathering, but normally about 10-12 attendees. Contact Mark Sihlanick N2QT, Tel: 434-525-2921

If you'd like to add or correct a listing, contact K3TN for inclusion in the Newsletter!



Now a Word From Our Sponsors

PVRC doesn't ask for dues, but the Club does have expenses. Please send PayPal donations via DAVE@WR3L.NET or by snail mail to Dave's address at QRZ.com. You can also support the Club by buying from the firms listed who advertise in the newsletter, or by getting your company to sponsor the newsletter!

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