



Potomac Valley Radio Club Newsletter

December 2006

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and www.pvrcnc.org

PVRC welcomes Bill Prettyman, W3DR; Bob Johnson, K3MQ; Phil Heck, KB3MDY; Ronnie Starkey, WV8RS; Bill Schwartz, K3WI; Dennis Karol, KB3MJ; Joe Stormer, W3TL; and James Horgen, W0OTL to the Eastern Shore chapter. PVRC also welcomes Larry Boellhoff, W3MGL to the Tidewater chapter; Phil Jung, K9PJ and Ashton Snelgrove, KI4NYS, to the South-west Virginia chapter; and Doug Barton, KN5DX, to the Central chapter.

See you at the Holiday dinner—Monday, December 4

Editor's Note

By Pete Smith, N4ZR

Congratulations to everyone for a spectacular Sweepstakes, one that shattered all previous PVRC records for participation and total score. However the awesome mano-a-mano with NCCC comes out, we raised the bar for everyone and made the contest truly memorable for me. Now it's time to start writing those first-person stories, tech articles on the latest winning widget, or what have you. W3DQ takes over here with the February issue, and that's the best way to welcome him aboard!

From the President

By Jim Nitzberg, WX3B

It's the Monday after our Sweepstakes effort and I am amazed and impressed by the PVRC turnout this past weekend. Most of you have seen the stories on our email reflector about PVRC members helping others, lending out their stations, building and repairing stations, and getting on the air to play in Sweepstakes! Thanks to all that participated in any way in this great event. We now move onward to Thanksgiving, CQ Worldwide CW and the holidays.

Our Sweepstakes effort reminded me of the most important lesson we all learn by watching our club's finest contestants. It's not about having the best station; It's not about how fast you can run stations; It's about planning -- making sure your equipment works -- and then operating: sitting in the chair, making contacts, and sticking it out to the end. That's what makes the difference.

To all the PVRC members participating in the great Sweepstakes shootout of 2006, and those who may not have participated directly but cheered them on by helping with their antennas and stations and encouraging them, a hearty Thank You! To Dean Straw, N6BV, and the entire NCCC group, another Thank You for the great camaraderie and competitive spirit is in order.

Finally, to Ty, K3MM, our resident Sweepstakes leader: You continue to set the example of how to do it right. Even with hardware failures and other difficulties, you turn in a great score!

PVRC Nominations for Officers and Trustees Continue

I am pleased to continue the current nominations for PVRC Officers and Trustees. The PVRC holds elections each year for these positions, and I encourage the chapter leaders and membership to ask anyone they feel is qualified and might enjoy a leadership position a chance to run for office. Here is the current slate:

1. President: Jim Nitzberg, WX3B
2. Vice President: Ken Claerbout, K4ZW
3. Vice President: Mark Bailey, KD4D
4. Treasurer: Dave Baugher, WR3L
5. Secretary: Anthony Brooks, WM3T

Board of Trustees:

K3MM, KE3Q, N3OC, N4ZR, W4MYA, W4ZYT, N4AF, ND3A, W3PP, K2AV

The floor will remain open for additional nominations until the December 4th Holiday Dinner.

A Holiday Reminder: please mark your calendar for the 2006 PVRC Holiday Dinner, which will be held on **Monday, December 4th** at **P.J. Skidoos** in Fairfax, VA.

85 PVRC members and guests attended last year's event. 69 have already registered, and I anticipate more as the date gets closer. As I will not be able to attend, Ken, K4ZW will be presiding over the dinner and distributing the awards .

Please take time to truly appreciate and give thanks for everything you have during this holiday season. From perspective in the PVRC, I am truly blessed to have an outstanding team of leaders, trustees, and members to work for. I look forward to 2007 – and the contesting that goes along with it!

73, Jim Nitzberg WX3B

PVRC Contest and Event Calendar — all dates and times are Zulu except as noted)

ARRL 160-Meter Contest 2200Z, December 1 to 1600Z, December 3

PVRC Holiday Dinner, P.J. Skidoos, Fairfax VA, December 4

ARRL 10-Meter Contest 0000Z, December 9 to 2400Z, December 10

Stew Perry Topband Challenge 1500Z, Dec 30 to 1500Z, Dec 31

The Toolbox

By Don Daso, K4ZA

Slings are simply wonderful tools. I discovered them years ago while wandering through an outdoor store, and have been using them (along with carabiners) in tower work ever since. I'm speaking here of web slings— aircraft cable, metal mesh, and other types of construction do exist, but the loads encountered by most hams don't require their heavier capabilities.

And, while there are a number of precautions used in the commercial world, they won't apply to ham use. Store them in a dark, cool place (UV is damaging) and use them properly (to me, this means not letting anyone else use them), and they'll probably last your lifetime. Here are some ideas and guidelines for safe lifting, and suggestions for tramping loads.

Safe Lifting—There are four primary factors to consider before lifting a load: the size, weight, and center of gravity (CG) of the load; the number of legs and the angle the sling makes with the horizontal line; the rated capacity of the sling; and finally, the history or care and usage of the sling

The center of gravity of an object is that point at which the entire weight may be considered as concentrated. To make level lifts, the lifting hook (from a crane or wherever) must be directly above the CG. Some small variations are usually permissible, but if the lifting point is too far to one side of the center of gravity, the object will tilt.

And, as the angle formed by the sling leg and the horizon decreases, the rated capacity of your sling also decreases. In other words, the smaller the angle between the sling leg and the horizontal, the greater the stress on that sling, and the smaller the load it will safely support. Hams will not normally encounter loads that even approach the limit of the typical 1-inch or 2-inch web slings. But, know what you're working with—read the sling's label. The values listed are for new slings; older slings should be used with additional caution. NEVER exceed a sling's rated capacity!

The most common hitches we use to lift items are the vertical hitch, or the choker hitch and basket hitch. A vertical hitch is made directly from the lifting hook to the load, usually attached by means of another hook. A choker hitch means the sling passes entirely around the load with one loop passing through another on the sling's opposite end, forming a simple noose or "choke" hitch. The basket hitch means you pass the sling under and around the load, with both eyes or ends going back up to the lifting point.

Sling angles are indeed important. They directly impact the rated capacity of the sling. This angle is measured between horizontal and the sling leg, regardless of hitch. Whenever pull is exerted at an angle on a leg, the tension on the leg is increased. For example, each sling leg in a vertical basket hitch absorbs 500-lbs of stress from a 1,000-lb load. That same load, lifted using a 60-degree basket hitch, exerts 577-lbs of tension on each sling leg. Without consulting some chart telling you what the increased load will be, follow this simple rule: *If the LENGTH of the sling leg is greater than the SPAN or WIDTH, the lifting angle is okay.*

You'll quickly realize that angles less than 45 degrees should be avoided. If you have trouble remembering, simply think about hoisting two buckets of water—one in each hand. It's very hard to lift & hold them with your arms outspread, but you can pick and hold the buckets quite easily, with your hands and arms by your sides. Keep your loads as vertical as possible, that's the idea.

There are some excellent graphics explaining both the hitches and the implications of sling angle at <http://www.fdlake.com/rig-slng.html>, which are not reproduced here because of copyright considerations. The site also provides much more detail on rigging methods and equipment.

Slings are swell tools, and they can make lifting our sometime heavy (and regardless of weight, cumbersome, 3-D antennas) Yagis and beams so much easier. Combined with some modern climbing accessories, rigging and lifting can actually be fun. (Even though it always takes far longer to set the rigging than actually raising the antennas!)

Understanding slings and those climbing tools will make tramming antennas relatively easy. Whether it's a small tribander or some monster Yagi, hauling antennas up and into place can be one of those moments of applied science that awes and amazes even the experienced rigger.

What's in your Toolbox?

Briefly Noted...

Fred Laun, K3ZO, passes on word that PVRCer **Hugh Turnbull, W3ABC**, turned 90 on November 1 and continues an active member of the Over The Hill Gang chapter.

Congrats, Hugh!

Ammunition for Little Pistols

By **Bill Axelrod K3WA**

Wow! Did we PVRC Little Pistols come through or what? I heard a record number of you in the CW SS. And about 75% of the stations I worked in the SSB SS were PVRCers. Of course, my SSB SS only lasted 45 minutes. Only 45 minutes for a complete contest you ask? Here's what not to do, Little Pistol or Big....

In last month's column I mumbled about getting part of my basement finished into a comfortable, modern ham shack. I got the job started, did the CW SS, and then had the contractor start up again. Left an extra 10 days in the work schedule for the inevitable "oh no". So, with all that the job, was supposed to be done, minus paint and carpet by the Friday before the SSB SS. I should have known the rest. But, oh my, this quasi-little-pistol just wasn't smart enough – again.

Work got in the way first. And I didn't get home to West By-God Virginia until mid-morning Sunday. And yes, most everything was done as promised. So, I got busy. First I had to clean the mess in my new radio shack room, including ladders, tools, and buckets of miracle dry wall goop. Swept up an inch of dry wall dust, etc. Keep in mind that this was the work I had planned for Saturday morning.

Then I had to build my new desk. I had ordered a "Ham Desk" made by a young fellow in New Hampshire who builds desks specialized for ham radio. Expensive but worth every darn penny. The desk will outlast me.

Desk built. Success. Now, all I had to do was drag all my gear out of the store room and set it up. Well ladies and gentlemen, I am officially ready to abandon my quasi-little-pistol status and go back to the simple life of a genuine little pistol. What happened to the idea of connecting an antenna to your rig, plugging it in, grabbing a pencil and log, and calling CQ Contest?

Oh heck no, it's not that simple when you are a real quasi-little-pistol. Rig, amplifier, computer, rotator, antenna switch, voice keyer, Micro-Keyer, paddles, controls to switch the beverages, the list goes on and on. And the unsightly, complex rats nest pile of wires and cables just keeps growing and growing and growing. But it all came together around 5:30 on Sunday. Oh well, about 4 hours and change left in the SSB SS. Why, I'll be fresh meat! So, 75 meters and my first CQ. Two CQs and an answer, then another. My best run ever on 75M. Rate grows to about 115 an hour on the N1MM logger rate meter.

But jeez, it gets cold on the mountain; so does my basement. 45 minutes after my first CQ I realize that I'm cold. So, like a dummy (and I don't mean dummy load), I reach over to turn on the brand new baseboard heater in my brand new radio room. KABOOM! A big arc, a big bam! And the whole darn house goes dark.

It not only gets cold in the mountains, it gets real dark. Not even the essence of light in my basement shack. Ever so slowly he walked, step by step, to find the stairs, get upstairs to where I know I have a flashlight. Bang! I walk into the wall of my new bathroom. Where did that come from? Zowie, I trip over a box of floor tile. Finally I bang my head on the stairs. All Right! Now I'm crawling. Up I go. Find the flashlight. What a relief.

With light this time I go down stairs. Isolate the cursed baseboard heaters, turn on the master house breaker that tripped after the initial short circuit, re-start the furnace, and I have heat and power. And it's time for the SSB SS to end. 45 minutes of SS glory.

So, fellow little pistols, the moral of this story is never ever rebuild your shack in the contest season. Do it only in the summer.

Good luck in the CQ DX , 160, and 10 meter 'tests and have a wonderful holiday season.

73 and CU in the 'tests... Bill

Let's Play "Looney Bin"! By George Goldstone, W8AP

Have you heard about the latest game? It's called "Looney Bin". You could call it "Multiple Insanity", "Super Stupidity", or whatever you want, but here is how it is played:

All the players - and there are a great many of them - gather in a large confined area, which is also occupied by people who are NOT playing "Looney Bin". Each player arms himself with a club, the size of which is limited by regulations of the game to one kilogram (that's 2.2 lbs.). Some players use a hinged club, the effect of which is to transmit additional energy, so that their clubs are the equivalent of 2 kilograms - sometimes called "2KG peak effective power."

The game has an announced starting time, at which time the players - and there are a great many of them, as we said - proceed to attract the attention of other players by hitting them over the head with their clubs. As the area where the game is played is usually crowded, a great many who are NOT players get hit over the head with one kilogram, which they do not like at all.

The objective of the game is to see how many players can be hit over the head with one's one kilogram club. Each player must keep a record, called a log (not to be confused with the club, which is a small log of another type). The best players can hit other players over the head with their club while keeping their log with the other hand. Upon being hit over the head, a player announces (a) how sharp the blow was, rated on a 1 to 5 scale; and (b) the pressure of the blow, rated on a 1 to 9 scale. Thus, upon being struck, the player shouts "5-9", and proceeds to exchange blows with the player who has just bounced his club off the first player's head. Obviously, it takes a pretty hard head to play this game, but after partaking in a number of such contests, one's head becomes almost impervious to the blows. Many players drop their participation in such events, of course, since they see no point to either being hit on the head, or exercising violence upon others.

Some parts of the playing area are more accessible than others, and the real challenge to a player is to hit the more remotely located players. When everybody tries to do this, what is known as a "pile-up" occurs, with dozens of players being hit over the head at once, and hardly anyone ever hitting the head of the player at which he had taken aim. Such "pile-ups" are very frustrating, and many players have abandoned the game because of them. The winner of the game is the player who has swung his club most effectively, hitting more players on the head than anyone else, and in more areas of the playing space. Indeed, it is considered a great achievement to have hit people on the head in every square foot of the playing area!

A ticklish situation has developed as a result of so many games of "Looney Bin" being played in the playing area. Indeed, some group or other is sponsoring a game almost every weekend. The people who don't like to play "Looney Bin" actually outnumber by far those who are avid "Loonie's." But, when the non-players object to filling up the large confined area, of which we spoke, with club wielding "loonies", the objectors are called - of all things - "soreheads". If their heads are sore, it is pretty obvious what made them so.

The game is played rougher in some parts of the country than in others. Cheating consists primarily of using a heavier club than the 1 kilogram rules allow. In California, it is said, clubs weighing several kilograms -as much as 18 kilograms having been reported - are sometimes used, and the hit other players' heads very, very hard. They hit non-players just as hard, and some non-players would like to abolish "Looney Bin" once and for all. How about you?

[Editor's note—I remember George from my teen-age ham days in Michigan in the 1950s, and believe he was a contender himself. According to QRZ, he is 89 years old, still living in Bloomfield Hills, and still active in the Southeast Michigan DX Association. Gee, and I thought he was really old in *those* days!

The above was originally printed in the *Auto-Call* in January 1971 and reprinted in *NCJ* for January/February, 1984. Thanks to Rich, NN3W, for finding and sharing it with us.]

My Most Memorable QSO

By **Fred Matos, W3ICM & YI3DX**

We all have memorable QSO's in our amateur radio experiences that we recall with great pleasure. Most of us can recall our very first QSO, and I am sure that we all have many other unique QSO's in our personal memory bank. This is one of my most memorable QSO's that I would like to share with you.

I was working on the 5-Band DXCC award back in the early 1980's, and I needed a few more countries on 80 meters as an insurance back-up to put me over the top to assure that I was complete on 80. It was winter time at my QTH in Annapolis, Maryland, and it was early in the morning, around 1:30 or 2:00 AM or so, local time. I was slowly tuning through the 80-meter SSB DX window one last time before going to bed. I heard a QSO in progress between a GU and a ZL, with both stations coming in very strong on my 80-meter dipole that sloped pointing towards Europe. I needed the GU, having ZL already confirmed.

I listened for a short time, and from the conversation, I could tell that they were nearly finished. I thought that I just cannot let this one slip away, so I broke into the QSO. The GU quickly came back to me, and he gave me a great report. He also said that the ZL heard me. I don't know why he said that, because the ZL was very strong and I could hear him very clearly. I then worked the ZL, and he also gave me an excellent report. (I was running a KW with a Drake L-7 amplifier.) I have QSL's from both.

This was one of those cases of work them first, and then figure it out later how you did it. I can understand the nearly all-darkness propagation path between me and the GU because it was around daybreak in Guernsey, or maybe an hour or so later. But my path into New Zealand must have been via some type of skewed path or a grey line. Even more mysterious to me is the propagation path between the GU and the ZL. Is that great line?

I discussed this QSO last summer at the fowl-fest with W3ZZ, Gene, and he theorized that I worked the ZL via grey line, but the GU-ZL path was still a mystery to the both of us. I invite opinions on the propagation paths that enabled the three of us to QSO each other.

NCCC/PVRC Presidents Exchange Post-Sweepstakes Kudos [from the PVRC reflector]

Hi Dean;

We did our best - and I have to say I heard a lot, way too many NCCC folks on this weekend, and you were all about 40dB/9, even loud on 75m!

This was the best club competition I've been involved with to date, and you guys (NCCC) played a first rate game and I concede that you out-did us, by miles, with those spots. Everyone at our club truly appreciated them, however I know we were lean at returning the favor. It's amazing how many NCCCs were spotting PVRCers repeatedly.

I want to reiterate how NCCC took a game, a GREAT game, and made it much better for everyone. Please pass my best wishes to everyone in your club for a safe holiday season, and thank them for a job well done. One of our clubs is going to be "happier" than the other with the results, however I think we all did well this past weekend.

On a personal note - thanks for saving the day for me with HFTA integration and VOACAP. Your papers, and your answers got me right where I needed to be. N6BV is on the bibliography page of a presentation I'm giving this Tuesday on using VOAREAS with HFTA antenna output to measure coverage reliability.

73 - it's time for a DX contest!

Jim WX3B

Jim:

Thank you for your kind and very gracious comments. You and PVRC are tough competitors, with a strong sense of integrity. Indeed, we at NCCC have been greatly energized by the competition from PVRC. And we know that PVRC has been energized greatly also -- perhaps too much, as seen from a purely NCCC perspective! We've all

been commenting among ourselves how many MDC and VA and NC stations were on this weekend. And we did note that PVRC was spotting stuff all weekend too. Thanks for returning the favor.

Yes, we believe strongly that such strong club competitions makes it better for everyone in the contest game. Scores were certainly higher than I recall for the last solar minimum.

May you and the members of PVRC have a great Thanksgiving.

K,D & 73,
Dean, N6BV

My Life Abroad in Ham Radio—Continued **By Fred Laun, K3ZO**

[continued from last month—Fred in Thailand]

Based on my experience with earlier bosses, the minute I got back to my office I went in to see Jim and began to download for him the mass of intelligence I had stored in my cranium during my lunch with Kitti. Jim held up his hand and said: "I don't want to hear it. People will get the idea you're working for somebody else. The next time you have lunch with Kitti and he starts to bring stuff like this up, change the subject." Excellent advice and I have admired Jim ever since for saying it, but that's not the way the vast majority of my colleagues felt. It didn't take long for me to learn that, regardless of the turf wars that our home agencies might be engaging in back in Washington, overseas we were all members of one Embassy Country Team led by the Ambassador and as such we each contributed our respective special skills to the mission of the Embassy which was spelled out in documents drawn up at the Embassy and ratified by Washington each year.

Nevertheless after Jim's warning I became more circumspect in how I handled such useful information to which I generally came quite by accident. It was all I could do, for example, when, during a party at my house in Nicaragua for a bunch of the local hams, where generous servings of cocktails had the standard effect of loosening tongues, one fellow began to talk about how he maintained all the repeaters for the Sandinista leaders so that they could communicate with each other by radio no matter where they happened to be at the time, and the frequencies they used were ---. It was all I could do to keep from grabbing a piece of paper and writing them down, but instead I stopped him and changed the subject to that of his family. In short order I learned that his 14-year-old son was a fanatic about airplanes. Not long after that the boy's room was decorated floor to ceiling with posters of all the latest USAF aircraft and the Air Force Attaché had the list of frequencies that I had so carefully refrained from accepting.

As I explained in my earlier story about Santo Domingo, the special knowledge about radio that I had acquired, often without realizing it, was at times useful to our mission, and I felt I had to act on it even though USIA back in Washington might not have wanted me to do that for exactly the reasons my former boss Jim had stated. I had to act on it because I knew it would be useful to the U.S. mission and that I was the only one on staff who had the capability to find out what we needed to know.

To use Nicaragua as an example again, I had applied for a ham license there as I had at all of my other overseas postings. The Sandinista Government never said "no" but they never said "yes" either. I had taken a Drake line with me to Managua in the belief that I could get a license due to the fact that a reciprocal operating agreement existed between our two countries. While awaiting the license which never came I strung up a 40 meter dipole in the back yard and hooked the R4C receiver up to it. Just before leaving for Nicaragua I had installed my 80 meter beam here and rented my place to Dave Pascoe, KM3T and I wanted to know how the beam sounded at the other end, so by pre-arrangement Dave would point the beam south while occupying the DX window on 75 and call CQ DX and work whatever KP4's, YV's etc that would answer while I would be listening. One night while listening for Dave I ran across a loud carrier and, turning off the BFO I found it was an AM broadcast of the El Salvador rebel radio, "broadcasting from liberated territory in El Salvador". Strangely enough the station had rapid QSB which almost sounded like aurora flutter, but in fact you seldom hear aurora flutter at that latitude, especially on

75 meters.

So I began to put two and two together the way nobody else in the Embassy would have been able to. The QSB was caused by interference between the station's skywave and ground wave; this meant that the transmitter in fact had to be located pretty close to Managua. This was not really surprising because the Sandinistas were known to be sympathetic to the rebels in El Salvador. I reported the matter to the Ambassador and was later asked by someone else in the Embassy to try to track the exact location of the transmitter down.

It so happened that at the same time VOA was trying to find a way to put a strong medium wave signal into downtown Managua. An earlier attempt to do so by means of a 50 KW transmitter in Costa Rica had been a miserable failure because the design of the transmitting antenna had been your standard medium wave vertical array design, which depends on ground wave to cover the target area. The low angle of whatever sky wave the array emitted caused the signal to skip right over Managua and instead cause QRM to a long-time occupant of the same frequency in Veracruz, Mexico, and that station was complaining bitterly to Washington, which was already upset by the fact that the Costa Rica station wasn't doing the job expected of it in Nicaragua.

Our Ambassador in Costa Rica at the time, Prof. Lew Tambs, had been my Ambassador in Colombia for most of my time there and we had hit it off very well. Lew was a political appointee and I found in my career that all in all it was easier to be a press spokesman for a political appointee than for a career officer of the State Department since most career State Department officers were scared to death to talk to the press for fear that they might inadvertently say something which would cause them problems with the bosses in Washington and thereby have a negative effect on their careers. Since Lew knew I was a ham he asked my personal opinion of why the installation in Costa Rica wasn't living up to expectations and I told him that it was because whereby the designers had maximized ground wave in their design, what was needed was an installation which maximized sky wave. He pulled some strings and not long afterward I was in Washington saying the same things to VOA engineers. Many of them had already come to the same conclusion and so a new site was acquired, in Belize, and VOA proceeded to erect a multi-element horizontal wire array fixed on Managua. When they were ready to start testing the new station they sent me a very nice field strength meter (probably the FIM-41 -- see <http://www.pi-usa.com/fim2241/fim2241g.htm>) and asked me to make measurements at different specified times.

I happened to be in possession of this FSM when the matter of the Salvadoran rebel transmitter arose, so Somporn and I piled in our car with the FSM between us and drove around suburban Managua until the signal of the rebel transmitter began to get really strong. With the FSM you could switch in several levels of attenuation so that when it began to overload you would switch in more attenuation and keep going. Finally when I got to the point where a seated sentry with a rifle across his lap blocked the way I decided to turn around and head back home. If the Embassy wanted to pinpoint the place any further they would have to assign the job to somebody who was in that line of work. It so happened that a ham friend of mine in Managua lived not far from the location of that clandestine transmitter, and when I mentioned it to him he asked me why I hadn't asked him before. It turned out he knew very well where the station was because he and his neighbors were bothered constantly by its TVI!

Around the same time another U. S. Government agency had erected a powerful station in El Salvador beamed at Managua and, unlike the VOA, whose news may have been critical of the Sandinistas but only in a general way, always using polite terms when referring to particular individuals, the El Salvador station had been turned over to Nicaraguan anti-Sandinista exiles who were not shy about referring to particular Sandinista *comandantes* in the grossest of terms, detailing their sexual exploits and other indiscretions in which they had been alleged to engage. The *comandantes* were not amused and proceeded to set up a jamming station which would at least prevent the station from being heard in most of Managua, though they couldn't do much about blocking it in the rest of the country.

By this time I had learned that the by using the FSM, which had very sharp nulls, at my residence, I could map the general locations of all the AM transmitters in Managua, so when I was asked to get a fix on the Sandinistas' jamming station the task proved quite easy. In fact I was able to tell the Ambassador that, each day as he went to work, if when he passed the drive-in chicken restaurant on his left, he instead would look to his right, he would see the two towers from which the jamming station's horizontal wire was suspended. This information was turned

over to the aforementioned Air Force Attaché who did a full report on the site, complete with photos, which earned him a nice commendation from Washington.

The opportunity to help the government acquire useful information didn't only happen to me overseas. During one of my Washington assignments I was approached by a ham friend who at the time was with a company whose business included installing navigation equipment in private aircraft from all over the Western Hemisphere. My friend said that he was learning things that he thought the U. S. government wasn't aware of and ought to know, and as a patriotic American citizen he wanted to report. I spoke to another ham friend of mine in an appropriate government position and suggested that he have an old-line officer close to retirement debrief my friend on a regular basis. The particular request that an officer close to retirement be the contact was based on long experience which taught me that eager young careerists are not the best at handling information from useful sources because they were more likely to embellish the information in order to try to enhance their careers.

My request was fulfilled to the letter and the information provided proved so useful that the ham friend in government who I had approached received a commendation as a result. Unfortunately as time went on a rival government agency learned of this useful flow of information and pulled rank to take over the debriefing of the contact. The eager young officer appointed to do the job seemed to be more interested in learning from my friend how to go into private business for himself and make lots of money than he was in the information my friend was providing, and my friend broke off the contact in disgust.

All of the above by way of saying that those of us in the Foreign Service but not specifically in the business of gathering intelligence would nevertheless run across opportunities to contribute useful intelligence simply by happenstance. The wide variety of specialized knowledge and acquaintances one acquired by being an active ham contributed directly to this ability, as can be seen, both on the input and output side of the intelligence pipeline.

'Twas the Season for Contesting....

By Jose Castillo, N4BAA

'Twas the season for contesting
And all through the house.
N1MM running
With both keyboard and mouse.

The antennas were hung on the tower with care
In hopes of a high score from QSOs everywhere.

The macros where programmed and ready to go,
As I watch the clock tick for the start of the show.
All monitors lay out so as to properly see
The points coming in as I smile with much glee.

When out of the QRM I strained to make shown,
A much needed contact, "YES!" a new zone!

The hours did pass, some fast and some slow,
Watching my score build....up up and up grow!
I glance out my window to see the north star,
A sign from above ...next time SO2R!

Amidst the long contest, "Band Mapping" for more,
CQ'n away ... I glance to the door.
My wife stood in amazement and shaking her head,
"Good luck dear, have fun...I'm going to bed."
I gave her a smile and a smooch through the air,

And return my tired eyes to the monitor glare.

Excitement at dawn as the "gray line" gets near,
Faint signals on low bands that I'm straining to hear.
Search and Pounce seeming best at this time of the day,
As all of the big guns are blasting away!

As the Low bands piddle out and its a band change to twenty,
Where no matter the time, you can always find plenty!
Checking for mults on the other bands as well,
As they open to Europe, it surely is hell.
When the sun rises high the east coast is hopin',
That 10 will give way to the south, "PROPAGATION OPEN!"

As the contest slows down and comes to a end,
A submittal of score and a hope for a win.
Months slowly pass for both me and for you,
When finally the score...in QST or CQ!

As I glance down the list to see how I did,
Anticipation is high and I feel like a kid!
Down further, down further... and FINALLY I see,
MY score it is listed....for PVRC!

Around the Club Meeting Minutes from the Chapters

PVRCNC-East November Meeting Notes—Our November meeting was reserved for a special celebration....The 10th anniversary of the birth of the NC Chapter of the PVRC. During that time, the NC chapter has grown, matured, and welcomed many new contesters into the fold. Now there even exist two geographical groups within PVRCNC...East and West!

Our guest of honor and founder of the chapter, Howie (N4AF), made the trip to Raleigh from his QTH out east. We had one of our strongest turnouts in recent history, enjoyed a wonderful time of remembrances, saw some excellent pictures depicting many of us a "few" years younger, and were quizzed with another challenging "Paper Contest." The 21 in attendance were: W0UCE, Jack; K4CIA, Bill; NX9T, Jeff; N4TL, Tom; W4KAZ, Keith; K4QPL, Jim; K1ZW, Larry; NT4D, Jay; K2AV, Guy; AD4L, Pete; KE4GY, Frank; N1LN, Bruce; N1YXU, Laurie; AL4T, Brad; W4MY, Marty; KC4HDI, Chris; N4AF, Howie; KA1ARB, Rob; N2NFJ, Bob; N4YDU, Nate; and N4PY, Carl.

K4QPL welcomed the group and outlined the evenings agenda. W0UCE conducted the regular "Paper Contest." This month was another "Sprint" and involved answering questions about our chapter "Big Gun- aka N4AF." Howie of course won but there was a 6 entry tie for second and, surely out of an act of pity, NX9T was awarded the victory and took home the multi-role pack of black tape. Pete, AD4L presented an array of recollections from group members concerning N4AF, operating at his station, and the many who credit Howie with influencing their contesting career. Jim, K4QPL, presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Howie as a way to recognize the many contributions Howie has made to PVRC in general, and more specifically, to PVRCNC.

Member Reports:

N4AF: Howie remarked on how it does his heart good to see how the chapter has grown over the years. At home, he has been working on antennas and preparing for SS and CQWWCW. K1ZW: Larry worked 250 Q's during the CQWW and has been adding to his antenna farm. The most recent additions include multiple verticals. K4CIA: Bill is contemplating a QRP SSCW effort. Otherwise, most of his time has been spent DXing.

NX9T: Jeff played in the CQWW to the tune of over 700 Q's and will be on for the Sweeps.. some CW and more aggressively for SSB.KE4GY: Frank listened in some during the CQWW and reports that his station is working well these days. N1LN: Bruce is ramping up for a 24 hour effort in SSCW. He has been working on various antenna and rotator installations issues. Plans to do a "multi" with N1YSU during SSB Sweeps. N1YXU: Laurie reported that she and OM N1LN have been working on an Emergency Communications presentation for another group of which they are members. She hopes to be on the air during the SS SSB.

AL4T: Brad tuned into the CQWW for an hour or so and plans to be on for SS. He has been working on a K9AY RX loop and other antennas. He reportedly "burned up" a tribe of USB ports recently! N2NFG: Bob stated that his last serious operating was during the CQP. He does plan to be on for SS and some RTTY tests. N4YDU: Nate operated during the CQWW and plans to be on in the SS. N4PY: Carl has been doing some Dxing with his Orion as well as enjoying his new QTH in the NC mountains!

W4MY: Marty is pleased to announce that his tower has been completed. It is now sporting a C3 and XM240. These antennas led to a fun time during the CQWW. KC4HDI: Chris, XYL of W4MY, reported that she has been assisting Marty with his tower projects. K4QPL: Jim has been preparing for the SS and intends to go at it hard! He did miss the CQWW but has been getting his new Orion all set up and ready to go.

N4TL: Tom worked around 300 Q's in the CQWW and plans to be on in both modes for SS. W4KAZ: Keith played some in the CQWW but has been busy with projects around the house (note: and putting together our great SS page on the PVRCNC webpage). W0UCE: Jack happily reported "no lightening strikes" for the month of October! He is putting up a new dipole for SS and has been enjoying his new key. NT4D:Jay indicated that his tower has been repaired and his antennas (big'ns) are back up.

K2AV: Guy is also preparing for SS. He has installed N1MM, made final coaxial connections, and is putting up a new "K2AV Special" for 40m. AD4L: Pete has been busy with school, his new hobby (motorcycle racing), and helping Howie with some antenna work He plans to be on for the SS.

KA1ARB: Rob is getting ready for SS by adding wire beams for 40m. He is planning on putting together a Multi-Op for SS SSB.

EMAIL REPORTS: K4TMC: Henry will be operating during the SS SSB. K4CZ: Barry continues to work on his tower/antenna and reports that his station is working great. He was on for the CQWW and will be on during the Sweeps.

Our annual plea for contributions for the costs associated with the web page and other smaller expenses was made. To the credit of our group, the need was met (exceeded) by the end of the meeting! We ended with a SS Rally Cry and a plan to personally contact members who haven't been around recently in order to encourage them to join in on the fun with SS.

We look forward to another great gathering in December. Don't miss out...mark your calendars now for December 7th and join us for dinner and a chance to fill us in on your SS (CW and SSB) and CQWW CW adventures!

73, Jeff, NX9T

The November **Central Region** PVRC Meeting was held at Topolino's Restaurant in Clinton, MD, on Monday, November 13. We had a great crowd: KC3VO, WR3Z, N3ST, KN5DX, KD4D, KE3Q, K3ZO, W4EE, WM3O, K4VV, N3RR, W3TOM, W3UL, KI3O, and K3WI

PVRC Business: We are pleased to announce that three new members were voted into PVRC: Larry, W3MGL, Phil, K9PJ, and Doug, KN5DX (present!). Jack (K4VV) passed some great looking antenna pictures around the room, and Mark, KD4D led a lively discussion on the "Top 10 ways to help PVRC win the Gavel Back".

It was Bill, K3WI and Doug, KN5DX's official welcome to PVRC. A fine dinner and fellowship was enjoyed by all.

73, Mark KD4D Jim, WX3B

The Northwest Region met at the City Buffet in Frederick, MD on October 17. In attendance were:

WF1L, N3VOP, W2YE, K2PLF, N6WHB, W3KHZ, W3EKT, K4ZA, W3CQH, K4VV, W0YR, W8LRL, K3OQ, W3ZZ, W3IDT, W3LJ, K3NCO, W8ZA, W6NRJ, WN3R and W3LL.

KI4NYS, Ashton was voted into PVRC tonight. Ashton is a member of the Virginia Tech radio club. He's a new ham and has taken an interest in contesting. Ashton's first meeting was at Dayton and second one at the SWVA chapter. Bud, W3LL nominated Ashton who was then voted unanimously into PVRC. Welcome aboard Ashton! Applause!

From Around the Table:

See Audio File of this meeting on the PVRC website. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

73, Bud W3LL, Chairman

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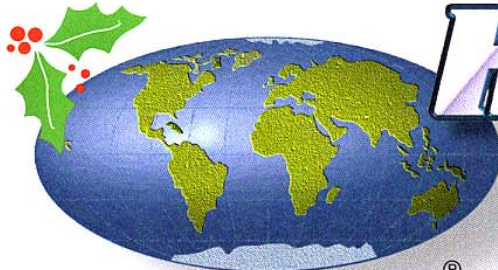
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